RIDICULING THE EMPIRE

RHETORICAL STRATEGY AS CRITIQUE OF THE MONARCHIC DISCOURSE OF SALVATION IN GENESIS 47.13-26

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Abstract

This work explores how Genesis 47.13-26, a text that rarely, dealt with in the exegetical work on the Joseph story, can be read as a denunciation and critique of the monarchic tributary system and its theological support through the temple-state apparatus. Through literary, socio-historic and rhetoric analysis, I approach this text in an effort to interrogate its socio-economic and ideo-theological interests, not only to understand the possible perspective from which it might have been written, but also to discuss to what extent the story can contribute to projects of socio-economic justice in the Costa Rican context. I argue that Genesis 47.13-26 evidences the dynamics of socio-economic exploitation and religious legitimation in Ancient Israel, related to the Israel and Judah monarchy from the 10th century BCE onwards and reflected in texts like 1 Samuel 8 and 2 Kings 12 and highly contested by prophets like Micah and Amos. The temple-state system would have legitimated the dispossession of the peasantry through tithes, taxes and corvée labour, giving support to the development of a debt dynamic that provoked economic distress and eventual loss of the peasantry's land to the benefit of the upper classes. I state that Genesis 47.13-26 exposes this reality in such a way that it challenges the monarchic tributary system and its theology by making evident the dispossession this brings to the Israelite population. Therefore, the rhetorical discourse in Genesis 47.13-26 becomes a denunciation and contestation of the economic exploitation of the tributary system and the discourse of salvation of the monarchy. I also support this idea through intertextual work. I engage in an analysis of the socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses in the Joseph story, in order to understand the literary context of Genesis 47.13-26. I conclude that this corpus could be considered propaganda of the monarchy and its tributary system and an attempt to present the institution and its economic practice as divinely established and necessary for the survival of the people. The function of Genesis 47.13-26 within this literary corpus could be, considering that Genesis 47.13-26 is seen by most scholars as an insertion to the Joseph story, to contend against the legitimating discourse of the monarchy. This aspect would explain the discursive differences between Genesis 47.13-26 and the rest of the Joseph story. I also locate Genesis 47.13-26 alongside other texts that seem to challenge the monarchy's tributary system. Using literary, socio-historic and rhetoric analysis, I highlight the similarities between this text and 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, arguing that these three texts belong to Old Testament traditions that denounce and resist the exploitative manner of the Israelite kings. In order to facilitate a dialogue between the ideo-theology in Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican socio-economic context, I test this text's "capacity" to promote liberating projects by using Postcolonial and

Liberation Hermeneutics. With these frameworks, I interrogate the text's power dynamics and silenced voices, finding in its ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses some elements that could be useful to analyse and denounce the Costa Rican unjust socio-economic structures. The last section of the thesis is focused on Contextual Bible Study Methodology, in the search for ways to incorporate the interests of common readers in the work of the biblical sciences and also to offer common readers the interpretive tools biblical sciences have developed. I describe one Contextual Bible Study developed from the elements Genesis 47.13-26 offers, which invites readers to a re-interpretation of the text from the perspective of the impoverished and oppressed in the Costa Rican context. This is in order to promote the transformation not only of personal and public ideo-theological paradigms but also of an unjust socio-economic reality.

Este trabajo explora cómo Génesis 47.13-26, texto que raramente ha sido analizado en el trabajo exegético sobre la Historia de José, puede ser una denuncia y crítica del sistema tributario de la monarquía y su teología través del aparado del templo-estado. Usando herramientas del análisis literario, socio-histórico y retórico, analizo este texto en un esfuerzo por interrogar sus intereses socio-económicos e ideo-teológicos, no sólo para entender la posible perspectiva desde la cual pudo haber sido escrito, sino también para discutir hasta qué punto la historia puede contribuir en proyectos de justicia socio-económica en el contexto costarricense. Mi argumento es que Génesis 47.13-26 evidencia las dinámicas de explotación socio-económica y legitimación religiosa vividas en la monarquía del Antiguo Israel, desde el siglo 10 a.C. en adelante, reflejadas en textos como 1 Samuel 8 y 2 Reyes 12 y denunciadas por profetas como Miqueas y Amós. El sistema de templo-estado habría legitimado la desposesión del campesinado a través de diezmos, impuestos y trabajos forzados, permitiendo el desarrollo de una dinámica de endeudamiento que provocaría problemas económicos y la perdida de tierra del campesinado en beneficio de las clases más acomodadas. Génesis 47.13-26 expondría esta realidad de tal manera que desafiaría el sistema tributario monárquico y su teología, haciendo evidente la desposesión que trae a la población israelita. Por tanto, el discurso retórico en Génesis 47.13-26 se convierte en denuncia y resistencia de la explotación económica del sistema tributario y del discurso salvador de la monarquía. Esta idea también es apoyada a través de un trabajo intertextual. Analizo los discursos socio-económicos e ideo-que teológicos en la historia de José, con el fin de entender el contexto literario de Génesis 47.13-26. Concluyo que dicho corpus podría ser considerado propaganda en favor de la monarquía y su sistema tributario, con el fin de presentar dicha institución y su práctica económica como divinamente establecidas y necesarias para la sobrevivencia de la población. La función de Génesis 47.13-26 dentro de este cuerpo literario sería, considerando que Génesis 47.13-26 es visto por la mayoría de exégetas como una inserción en la historia de José,

desafiar el discurso legitimador de la monarquía, aspecto que explicaría además las diferencias discursivas entre Génesis 47.13-26 y el resto de la historia de José. Génesis 47.13-26 es leído junto a otros textos que parecen desafiar el sistema tributario de la monarquía. Usando herramientas de análisis literario, socio-histórico y retórico, resalto las similitudes entre este texto 1 Samuel 8.11-18 y 1 Reyes 12.1-20, argumentando que estos tres textos pertenecen a tradiciones del Antiguo Testamento que denuncian y resisten las practicas explotadoras de los reyes israelitas. Para construir un dialogo entre la ideo-teología de Génesis 47.13-26 y el contexto socio-económico costarricense, examino la "capacidad" que tiene esta historia de promover proyectos de liberación, esto a través de la Hermenéutica Postcolonial y la de Liberación. Con estos marcos de interpretación, interrogo las dinámicas de poder y las voces silenciadas en el texto, encontrando en sus discursos socio-económicos e ideo-teológicos algunos elementos que podrían ser útiles para analizar y denunciar estructuras socio-económicas injustas en Costa Rica. La última sección de esta tesis lidia con la metodología de la Lectura Contextual de la Biblia, en una búsqueda por incorporar los intereses de lectoras/es comunes en el quehacer de la ciencia bíblica y también en un intento por ofrecer a dichos/as lectores/as herramientas interpretativas que la ciencia bíblica ha desarrollado. Describo un CBS con los elementos que Génesis 47.13-26 ofrece, el cual invita a reinterpretar el texto desde la perspectiva de las personas empobrecidas y marginalizadas en el contexto costarricense, esto para promover la transformación no sólo de paradigmas ideo-teológicos personales y públicos pero también de una realidad económica injusta.

DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Theology, in the Graduate Programme in Biblical Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Carlos David Castillo, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Name of Supervisor

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Signature

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Content

Introduction

This thesis witnesses my personal journey in search of biblical texts that have the power to boost liberating social and individual transformations. This work is focused on an exegetical and hermeneutical analysis of Genesis 47.13-26. The text is used as a *case study* to discuss to what extend the Bible can offer liberating theologies for contexts of struggle, in this case, that in Costa Rica. I include a section on South African Contextual Bible Study methodology. From this I will explore how Costa Rican communities can enter to dialogue with biblical stories and challenge and change oppressive theologies and structures in their society. The aims of the thesis are hermeneutical, contextual and pedagogical, centred in the search for ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses of liberation.

The choice of Genesis 47.13-26 is not at random. It provides not only the particular elements it carries as text, in its narrative, rhetoric and socio-historic levels, but also it has a confusing effect on most people who read it. It has captured my attention the way normal readers, those who are not academically trained, have hardly heard about this story. When they realize that this story exists, and that it tells how Joseph enslaves the Egyptians and imposes on them a perpetual tax, they do not know how to react. Usually they find difficult to harmonize the Joseph of this section with the one found in Genesis 37-50, who seems to be portrayed more positively. Their quick answer is usually intended to "save" one of the Old Testament most famous "heroes", by justifying his actions in different ways. In the Costa Rican context, for example, some people mentioned that the Egyptians were "pagans" who deserved God's punishment, and therefore they understood the text by seeing Joseph as God's instrument to do that. Others would say that God's wisdom was with Joseph, so the impoverishment and other consequences of Joseph's administration are within God's will. The capacity to find Joseph's actions problematic was rarely found in this context, and therefore it was impossible for them to denounce any injustice here. One of my hermeneutical preoccupations arose from these readers' difficulty to name injustice when they see it in the biblical text, usually because of the loaded interpretive tradition and the conflict they feel challenging an authoritative book which is considered God's word.

In terms of the academic readers, those who have worked professionally with the book of Genesis or the Joseph story, I have also found a struggle to make sense of Genesis 47.13-26 at the exegetical and hermeneutical level. In the exegetical work, some scholars have found this story a strange account, and therefore have ignored it when analysing the so-called "Joseph story" (Genesis 37-50). Most of them would claim that this text is an interpolation that has nothing to do with the Joseph story and especially with the positive construction of his character. When they mention it in their analysis of Genesis 37-50,

it would just be to confirm its problematic characteristics. Others would consider Genesis 47.13-26 as a text that harmonizes with its literary context and their work would focus on showing how this little account is in a theological and narrative connection with the rest of the corpus in offering a positive image of Joseph. I will try to explore other possibilities of understanding this text, which not only draws in these two perspectives, but also reaches different conclusions.

Problems arose also in the attempt to "judge" the situations narrated in Genesis 47.13-26, specifically Joseph's impoverishment of the Egyptians and his establishment of a perpetual tax system. Most of the scholars consulted consider that the story speaks about Joseph's wisdom and administrative skills in the midst of a famine and they find no problem in the dispossession and enslavement of the Egyptians. Others are more cautious in celebrating Joseph's actions and hesitate to defend them upfront, but they discuss that what he does is with "good" intentions and was permitted the context where the events occur. Very few have openly denounced or criticized the economic or ideo-theological implications of what happens in the text, either from an exegetical (their reading of text itself denounces Joseph) or a hermeneutical (their theological frameworks makes them denounce Joseph) perspective. I position myself in this last group, along with authors like Mark Brett and Francis Watson, in denouncing what the text narrates by using exegetical and hermeneutical tools.

The discussions above belong to part of the elements analysed in the first chapter of this thesis. The greatest task of this research is to understand the literary dynamics and social world that could have been behind the composition of Genesis 47.13-26, but also to have a general sense of the possible messages within this text. Specifically, my main objective, in the first chapter of the thesis, is to discern the text's ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses through an analysis of its rhetoric, using specifically the narrative elements of point of view. I believe that a key aspect in understanding the story, and therefore to be able to use it for liberating projects in the Costa Rican context, is to discern its ideological, theological and socio-economic position (s). By discerning these discourses, these rhetorical interests, I think I would be able to grasp how much Genesis 47.13-26 can support projects for liberation.

I dedicate three chapters to discern the ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses of Genesis 47.13-26. This arises not only from the lack of material written about this text, especially in its ideo-theological and socio-economic dimensions, but also from the need to construct a solid argument around the idea I propose, which requires deep intertextual work to support it. In the first chapter, I begin working on the literary, socio-historic and rhetoric dimensions of Genesis 47.13-26, using the three exegetical methods that I consider necessary to discern its point of view, that is, the perspective from which the story might have been written. The first section of this chapter deals with the narrative

dynamics of the story. Then I engage in a detailed study of the setting, structure, characters and characterization, repetitions, and point of view of the text, concluding that all these elements allow the reader to think that Genesis 47.13-26 is constructed in such way as to make evident and criticize the unjust economic structures in Ancient Israel. I continue showing how Joseph represents these structures in the story. The works of authors like Jerome Walsh, Dennis Olson and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon contribute greatly to this literary section.

I maintain this idea in the second section of the chapter, focused on socio-historical analysis. In this section, I work to define the possible social, political, economic, theological and cultural worlds that are reflected in Genesis 47.13-26. After discussing issues related to the history of composition of the text, and discussing the difficulty of finding certain information about elements related to date, authorship and place of composition, I engage with the possible ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses that could have influenced the story. In the socio-economic aspect, I focus on a description of the temple-state system of monarchic Israel, its structure based on taxation and loans, and the way such a structure promoted the slow impoverishment of the peasantry. Besides this, I deal with the ideo-theology that could have been behind this system. By engaging with the biblical text as ideological product and describing how religion and politics were inseparable in the Ancient world. Religion played an important part in the legitimation of the tributary system. Both ideo-theological and socio-economic factors were important elements for sustaining or bringing down a system. Therefore, my argument centres on proposing that Genesis 47.13-26 seems to develop an ideo-theological discourse against the socio-economically exploitative structure of the monarchy. Authors like Norman Gottwald, Robert Coote and Richard Horsley will be constantly cited in the development of this argument.

The last moment of this first chapter is the one centred on rhetorical analysis. Here I gather the information resulting from the literary and socio-historic analysis to discern the possible rhetorical agenda and strategy of Genesis 47.13-26 intended author. Especially I do this in terms of his socio-economic and ideo-theological preferences. I consider that not only the narrative dynamics of the text (literary dimension), but also the socio-political, ideo-theological and economic worlds that it reflects (socio-historic dimension), are important for constructing a sound argument around its possible rhetorical interests. Through the rhetorical methodology offered by Roland Meynet, and the ideological insights for reading biblical texts presented by Michel Clevenot and Ivo Storniollo, I use literary and socio-historic information to propose that Genesis 47.13-26 is a story that tries to ridicule or ironize monarchic claims of “saving” the Israelite population through the temple-state structure and its tributary system. I argue that the literary dimension of the story shows the negative consequences of such

system has the population and this is confirmed by the socio-historic information of the Israelite monarchic period.

As a result, in the first chapter of the thesis I will propose that the possible interest of the intended author of Genesis 47.13-26 could have been to expose this impoverishing socio-economic system to the readers in order to promote resistance. I attempt to rescue what I consider to be an ironic tone in the story. This would be a literary element used by the author to ridicule and make evident the contradictions between the official discourse of salvation of the monarchy and the actual conditions of socio-economic distress and structural oppression suffered by the population. To describe this, I use the work done my James Scott on hidden transcripts, and I highlight the powerful tools of resistance used by the oppressed in situations of domination. I read Genesis 47.13-26 from its rhetorical point of view, seeing it as a text that belongs to this kind of resistance.

In order to explain this argument in more detail, in the second and third chapters of this dissertation I engage in intertextual work. This is necessary to engage with Old Testament traditions that I consider support my reading of Genesis 47.13-26. In chapter two I point out the texts which theology could be in conflict with the one I find in Genesis 47.13-2 while in the third one I mention those which I think represent a similar tradition of resistance. This intertextual work is necessary to situate Genesis 47-13-26 within a debate around socio-economic and ideo-theological projects.

In chapter two I deal with the literary context of the so-called Joseph story, Genesis 37-50. As I did with the main text investigation, I engage with this textual corpus from literary, socio-historic and rhetorical perspectives, interrogating the socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses found there. At the literary level, the story seems to be interested in showing how Joseph becomes the administrator of Egypt due to God's will. God has given Joseph divine knowledge to interpret dreams and administer "wisely". The idea that Joseph is someone sent to save the lives of many people is repeated at key moments (for example Genesis 45.5 and 50.20), and at the end Joseph's brothers bow down to him while he offers them protection. The story is full of monarchic terminology (cf. Genesis 37.8 and 42.6) and seems to be interested, among other things, in justifying the rise of one brother to rule the others. This socio-historic analysis contributes to finding that Genesis 37-50 is a story that seems to be dealing with a time of transition in the organization and political economy of Ancient Israel (see for example Westermann 1986), where a monarchy and its tributary system was or had already been introduced (see Genesis 41).

Taking the resources offered by the literary and socio-historic analysis, and drawing in the work of authors like Robert Coote, Ivo Storniollo and Haroldo Reimer, the proposal in chapter two is that one of

the possible rhetorical messages behind Genesis 37-50 is an apology and propaganda for the monarchy. Such rhetorical project would like to present its institution and economic system as divinely inspired and necessary for the salvation of the people. The rhetoric of this section is constructed to convince the audience that Joseph, representing the monarch of the time (who is not clearly identified), would be a person whose reign was necessary for the survival of the people. These ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses in Genesis 37-50 would clash with the one in Genesis 47.13-26, which explains why Genesis 47.13-26 seems not to fit with the ideas of its literary context. After my work in these two narratives, I argue that Genesis 47.13-26 was put in the Joseph story so as to contest the main ideo-theological interest of the Joseph story, which is to legitimize the monarchy and its tributary system.

The Joseph story is an example of one biblical text that functions as a legitimation of the monarchy and its temple-state-tribute system. Other texts of the Old Testament tradition seem to reflect a resistance to the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects that texts like Genesis 37-50 represent. In order to connect Genesis 47.13-26 with texts that represent such resistance, In chapter three I take as *case studies* two narratives which I consider to be literary and socio-economically close to it. From this connection of texts I argue that Genesis 47.13-26 is an ideo-theological and socio-economic discourse of resistance.

Therefore, in chapter three I will engage with the literary, socio-historic and rhetorical analysis of 1 Samuel 8.1-11 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, trying to discern as well their ideo-theological and socio-economic agendas. A quick reading of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 helps to notice its similarities with Genesis 47.13-26, especially in the description of the actions of the person in power (King in Samuel administrator in Genesis), which allow me to make a connection between the two. Following the works of authors like Ronald Clements, Jonathan Kaplan and Gerald West, who contribute to the literary, socio-historic and rhetorical aspects of the story, I maintain that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a polemic text against certain ways of exercising kingship, especially when it comes to economic exploitation. This text is evidence that there were groups against a form of monarchy that dispossesses its population through tax, tribute and corvée labour. This puts this text next to Genesis 47.13-26 sharing its interest for denunciation and resistance.

1 Kings 12.1-20 is also approached from a similar perspective. After the literary, socio-historic and rhetorical work, I argue that this text demonstrates the resistance to the exploitative practices of the monarchy that existed in Ancient Israel and which is also reflected in Genesis 47.13-26. In terms of the socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses, 1 Kings 12.1-20 does not advocate for the elimination of the institution, but for a change in its practices, so that it does not extract such a heavy toll from the

resources of the population. After analysing the connections between Genesis 47.13-26, 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, I discuss the different characteristics of the temple-state system and its tributary structure in Israel-Judah. Then I describe the theories around the transition to a united and divided monarchy, in an attempt to understand its socio-economic and ideo-theological implications. I argue that Genesis 47.13-26, together with 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, reflect this long historical process, where the monarchy and its socio-economic and ideo-theological project play and important role in the progressive impoverishment of the Israelite population. Walter Houston, Marvin Chaney, and other authors like Mario Liverani and Alberto Soggin, are consulted in this section. At the end of the chapter, one of my conclusions is that at their rhetorical level, Genesis 47.13-26, 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, represent texts which ideo-theological and socio-economic projects denounce and criticize a monarchy based on a heavy tributary system.

However, trying to perceive the possible ideo-theological and socio-economic projects behind Genesis 47.13-26, which seem to denounce and criticize the exploitative manners of Israelite kings and their tributary system, is not the only interest of this work. The next important step I take here is to ask if the ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses promoted in Genesis 47.13-26 can support projects of liberation in the Costa Rican socio-economic context. Chapter four will deal with this question. I begin by describing the economic situation in Costa Rica in the last thirty years, emphasizing the economic distress that the transition from a welfare to a neoliberal model has brought up on the most of the population. Together with this description, I discuss how the Bible has been generally read in the Costa Rican context, concluding that such text is not used to reflect on the economic injustices suffered in the country. The sources to engage with the Costa Rican reality come from the work of authors like Luis Calvo, Rodrigo Quesada and Victorio Araya, together with documents from the Conferencia Episcopal de Costa Rica and the program Estado de la Nación. At the end of this section, I discuss how useful and necessary the biblical text can be to address social issues from a liberating perspective.

However, the second section of this chapter tries to interrogate the capacity of Genesis 47.13-26 to offer socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses of liberation to the Costa Rican economic context. My reading of the text is not innocent since part of my agenda is to engage with biblical interpretation from a liberating perspective, reading text and context from the perspective of the poor and marginalized in search of individual social transformation (following the CBS methodology explained in Chapter 4 section 4). Because of this, I cannot take for granted that the biblical texts are liberating per se, and therefore interrogating them in terms of their projects and agendas becomes necessary. In that sense, my reading of the Bible is interested in seeing how this book can promote a more just and inclusive society and therefore look for images of the divinity that sustain dignified and just experiences

of life. To read the texts from this perspective, and also to analyse whether the ideo-theological discourses in Genesis 47.13-26 can be considered liberating for my context, I use the elements offered by the Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics. Both are useful frameworks for interrogating a biblical text when it has the potential to promote injustice, oppression, marginalization, and submission of any kind. In addition, they have tools for finding in the biblical stories those theologies, realities and voices that have been silenced, in a search for their recognition.

Postcolonial Biblical Hermeneutics will contribute to the interrogation of Genesis 47.13-26 in terms of its power dynamics, the types of oppression and dominating structures it reflects, and the groups involved in the struggles to resist or impose such dynamics and structures. In the words of Sugirtharajah (2002: 52) Postcolonialism is an "ongoing battle for emancipation…", and the questions it allows the readers to ask to the biblical text will contribute to continue this project. Postcolonialism's interrogation of texts that have been used to oppress, as the biblical ones have, will help me to ask if Genesis 47.13-26 has any element that can contribute to liberation. In terms of Liberation Hermeneutics, I will refer constantly to the work of authors like Paulo Richard, Itumeleng Mosala, George Pixley and Clodovis Boff, placing these hermeneutics in a Latin American and African perspective. I will use their contributions to see what Genesis 47.13-26 can offer for emancipating people from socio-economic exploitation, for making evident structural injustice. Therefore, I am looking for biblical theologies that promote the transformation of an unjust society. At the end of this section, I will argue that Genesis 47.13-26 could have ideo-theological and socio-economic elements to denounce oppressive socio-economic systems and theologies that support them.

Following the exegetical and hermeneutical work described above, I will conclude that Genesis 47.13-26 is a text that offers liberating theological discourses to deal with situations of socio-economic oppression. This could make such text useful for addressing the issue in the Costa Rican context. After describing how this text can help Costa Ricans not only to identify structures of economic oppression and theologies that support them, but also to find a prophetic voice to denounce them, I move to a more pedagogical analysis, which is the final part of this thesis. This analysis shows another of the interests of this thesis, which is exploring how there can be dialogues between what West (1993) calls trained and ordinary readers, which is how biblical studies and the experience and knowledge of not trained communities contribute to a more critical reading of the biblical texts and the different contexts of living.

The last section of chapter four, then, is a description of the Contextual Bible Study methodology in general, and a reflection of its contribution to the Costa Rican context in particular. The UJAMAA Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research has worked on Contextual Bible Studies for more than 20 years, becoming an interface between organic intellectuals and reading

communities of the oppressed and marginalized. Its objective has been to engage with issues related to socio-economic, gender, race, environmental, and power relation issues, among others, analysing them to promote individual and social transformation. In this section, I describe the commitments of a CBS and propose them as very important not only to be able to make connections between texts and context but also to assume a concrete liberating perspective in our interpretations. In addition, I take the main elements of the CBS process, which deal with the commitments, the role of the facilitator and the community, the analysis of the reality, and the construction of the studies. I do this in order to explore the creation of a particular CBS study that deals with socio-economic issues for the Costa Rican context. The section draws greatly in the work of Gerald West, supported by writings from Sarojini Nadar and the experience on Contextual Bible Reading in the Scottish context.

The thesis will conclude with an example of a Contextual Bible Study for dealing with socio-economic injustice for the Costa Rican context. The central idea will be to explore a more contextual reading of the text in protestant communities in Costa Rica, trying to invite not only a more concrete reflection from these communities towards their social situation, but also to assume a critical perspective when they find theological discourses that promote violence and oppression. The hope is to promote an interest in reading the texts in order to respond to current important issues in the Costa Rican realities by approaching them from a liberating and dignifying perspective.

This work therefore, reflects my belief in that biblical texts can still offer theological discourses, images and projects that promote social justice, in spite of a reading tradition that has promoted a silence towards structural sin and socio-economic oppression. It also argues for a reinterpretation of biblical texts and images of God, so that as community we can elaborate more inclusive and life-giving constructions of the divinity, using not only the Bible but also our realities. My interest, however, is not centred in the Bible alone, but in many groups that are marginalized, oppressed, silenced and killed by social structures, whether religious or not. I want to be a prophetic voice, which among many others believes in a more inclusive and just society, and recognises the oppressive dynamics and the necessity to unmask and contest them from any areas of life, including the religious one.

Ridiculing the empire might sound an ambitious and pretentious title. However, it draws on the local knowledge of many oppressed and marginalized peoples, whose strategies of resistance function in in apparently undetected ways. It recovers the power of the powerless, whose resistance sometimes begins at a symbolic level, symbols that are imbedded within strong ideas of emancipation. The title wants to rescue the irony behind the discourse of dominators who, most of the time, think that most of their subjugated peoples ignore their oppressive conditions. *Ridiculing the empire* is a title that tries to highlight the modes that the oppressed have to deal with the discourses of the dominators, challenging

and resisting them sometimes in imperceptible ways to the powerful. It wants to make clear that the dominators do not have the last word, and that hopes for a better life are latent in the hearts of those who suffer injustice and are expressed in a diverse, creative, and powerful ways. May this work motivate its readers, as it has motivated the author, to believe and struggle for a different reality, dreaming and praying, with the prophet Amos, and many others prophets, to see the day when:

"…justice roll*s* down like waters,

And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).

Chapter One

Genesis 47.13-26 as denunciation of socio-economic exploitation

In this first chapter, my intention is to make sense of the meaning or meanings in Genesis 47.13-26. As I explain in later pages, this story has confused biblical interpreters and opened the door to criticize important persons in the Biblical tradition, in this case, Joseph. Discerning the message(s) of Genesis 47.13-26 is a difficult task, and I want to contribute to this discussion from a different perspective. I propose that the narrative point of view of Genesis 47.13-26 denounces socio-economic exploitation in ancient Israel. This idea is also the main hypothesis of my whole work, but due to the characteristics of the story, I extensively engage with other biblical texts in order to explore this thesis.

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Genesis 47.13-26 from a narrative, socio-historical and rhetorical perspective. I consider that the point of view of this story can be so difficult to discern that these three approaches are necessary to construct a solid argument about it. To understand the point of view is to perceive the socio-economic and ideo-theological elements of the text. These discourses are important for this work, also since from them I take elements to reread the story in the Costa Rican context. To understand them, therefore, becomes central not only at an exegetical but also at a hermeneutical level.

This thesis includes literary, socio-historical and rhetorical analysis. I begin by trying to discern "what the text says" from a narrative perspective. Once this task is completed, I work on the reconstruction of the possible social, political, theological and cultural world(s) that could have been behind the production of the story. Finally, using the results of these two analyses, I interrogate the possible rhetorical interests of Genesis 47.13-26. Since my interest is to deal with the point of view of the story and discern the socio-economic and ideo-theological elements that it can offer, the fourth section of this chapter discusses the socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects that the story may

provide.

1.Narrative Analysis of Genesis 47.13-26

Narrative analysis is a hermeneutical process that considers the "…final, extant form of the text as having coherent meaning" (Walsh 2009: 4), and therefore which is dedicated to interpret using the elements found *on the text* itself (See West 1993: 35-41 and Olson 2010: 15). This analysis requires close attention to literary elements such as character, setting, plot, structure, repetitions, and other elements like narrator, point of view, intended author, and intended reader (Walsh 2009: 6-9) and tries to perceive the story's meaning by discerning how these elements together tell a story. As Olson states, "Literary methods involve close readings of biblical texts with careful attention to their literary contours and textures". Authors like Alter (1981: 3), as well, point out how important it is also to analyse aspects such as word choice, narrative pace, dialogue, networks and other interconnections, for they are all important in the construction of the message. All the parts of the story play an important role to understand its meaning.

In the narrative texts of the Bible, and probably in most other types of texts, readers are invited to embrace "the world" that the texts portray. The world of the text is important since it has its own functional dynamics, using words, images, characters, repetitions, evocations, and other literary tools to produce meaning. Walsh (2009: 7) describes this by saying that, "It is most convenient to imagine this as a "world" (the world of the story), a realm where individuals live (characters) and things happen (events) in particular circumstances". A distinction has to be made between the world of the text and the real world. Walsh (2009: 7) points out that "…this world of the story is to be carefully distinguished from our own world (the "real world", as we are prone to call it). This does not seem that it is necessarily dissimilar to our own world, but it can be". Walsh's argument is transcendental when reading biblical texts, especially those that are mythological or those that, in certain way, break the barriers of nature, such as Jonah, for example. Walsh's narrative analysis emphasizes that "The rules by which the secondary world (the world of the story) operates may well be like those of the primary world (real world)…On the other hand, the secondary world's rules may be entirely different from the primary world's" (Walsh 2009: 7).

In light of this, the important question in narrative analysis has to be within literary aspects, trying to make sense of what the story wants to transmit in its own world and through its literary elements. This is important to avoid common misunderstandings when some stories of the Bible are interrogated through a lens that asks if what is narrated, especially when it is supernatural, could have

happened in in the primary world[1].

To begin this narrative analysis I provide the final version of the text that I use to interpret. This task is more related to socio-historic than literary analysis, but I include it here because of a need for clarity. There is a variety of versions and translations available today that make this clarification necessary. Furthermore, I talk about delimitation to explain why Genesis 47.13-26 has been isolated to undergo individual analysis. After these two steps, I engage with elements that are closer to narrative analysis, such as structure, setting, characterization, repetitions and point of view.

1.1. The text of Genesis 47.13-26:

In terms of the biblical version, this study is based on a combination of my own translation of the text and that of the New Revised Standard Version edition, 2002. I italicize those sections considered by most experts as difficult to translate, or which offer certain variations due to the history of transmission of the text. I discuss these variations in the third section of this chapter. I consider it important to mention the variations now, since they can provide wider possibilities to interpret the story. I especially highlight three main variations because of their potential to offer diverse readings of the text. The text of Genesis 47.13-26, on which this study is based, is the following:

13. There was no food in all the land, for very severe (was) the famine. And languished the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan in the face of the famine.

14. And gathered[2] in Joseph all the silver[3] to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for (the) grain which they bought; and brought (in) Joseph the silver to the house of the Pharaoh.

15. When the silver from the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was finished, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said: "give us food/bread! Then why (should/shall) we die before you because the silver[4] ceased?"

16. And said Joseph: "Give (me) cattle! And I (will) give food/bread[5] for cattle if the silver[6] ceased."

17. And they brought cattle to Joseph, and gave them Joseph food/bread for horses, and for cattle of flocks, and for cattle of herds/oxen, and for donkeys. And (he) *led*[7] (them) to food/bread for (in exchange for) all the cattle in that year.

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[1] Von Rad (1961) can be used as a good example for this. In his study of Genesis 47.13-26, he worries about the possibility that Joseph could have gathered all the cattle of Egypt in verse 17 without having problems with the space available. In my opinion, Von Rad is trying to understand an action that happens in the secondary world with a framework of the primary one, taking the narrative elements in a literal way and not considering the literary dimension of the story.

[2] In the piel the meaning of "jQl" is "complete or total gathering" (Rogers and Cornelius 1997 :818).

[3] "@SK"

[4] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

[5] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

[6] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

18. And that year ended; And they came in the second/following year and said: "We do not hide from my lord that if finished the silver, and the cattle and animals[8] (are /belong to) towards my lord, nothing is left before my lord except our bodies and our lands.

19. Why (should/shall) we die before your eyes, we and our lands? Buy us and our lands for food/bread, so we and our lands become slaves of the Pharaoh; and give us seed, so we live and not die, and the land do not become desolate."

20. And bought Joseph all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; the men of Egypt sold their fields because the famine strengthened upon them. And the land was for Pharaoh.

21. And the people *were caused to pass to the cities*[9] from one end of Egypt to the other.

22. Only the land of the priests he did not buy because (there was) a statute (prescription) for the priests from the Pharaoh. And they ate from the statute that gave them food/bread of Pharaoh. Thus, they did not sell their lands.

23. And Joseph said to the people: "I buy you and your lands for Pharaoh. Behold! (here there is) seed, so sow the land."

24. And be the produce[10], and give a fifth to Pharaoh; and four of a hand be for seed for the field, *and for food*[11], and for who (is) in your house, *so your children eat*[12].

25. And they said: "(you have) preserved us! We (have) found favour in the eyes of our lord to become slaves of Pharaoh."

26. And set it Joseph as statue to this day in the land of Egypt: *for Pharaoh the fifth part*[13]; only the land of the priests (is) separate, it (will) not be for Pharaoh.

Verses 17, 21 and 24 are the important variations I mentioned before. Verse 17 refers to an action done by Joseph, which has brought difficulties to translators. Speiser (1964: 351) prefers to translate the verb "lhn" as "saw them through or guided them", and many others share a similar interpretation of the word[14]. However, there could be an alternative reading of this verb, since according to Wanke (1997: 731), the word could also convey "to transfer, take into possession and become the owner of", meanings that are really attractive when the text is considered a denunciation of socio-economic injustice. I engage in detail with this in the third section of this chapter. In verse 21 there are two possibilities connected to narrative events. One single phrase can be translated, depending on

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[7] Wanke (1997: 731) offers the possibility to translate the verb "lhn" also as, to "transfer, get in possession, and become the owner".

[8] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

[9] Following the BHS (1997: 79), which reads "~yrl+['l, Atßao rybiî[/h, ~['êh'-ta,'w>". However, I follow the Septuagint, which seems to be closer to the literary context of the verse. This version reads "kai. to.n lao.n katedoulw,sato", phrase translated as "and the people were made slaves". See also the Samaritan Pentateuch, which agrees with the Septuagint (BHS 1997: 79).

[10] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

[11] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79)

[12] Absent in the Septuagint (BHS 1997: 79).

[13] Corrupted text (See BHS 1997: 79).

[14] For example, the New Revised Standard Version uses "supply" (2002: 116); The new English Bible uses "maintain" (1972: 40).

what manuscript it is based, as "*the people were moved to the cities"* or *"the people were made slaves".* Do these two translations exclude each other? I believe that they do not, and that in fact reading both of them provides a stronger support for the discussion of the dynamics of oppression the text seems to discuss.

The other variation is on verse 24. The phrase "for food for your children" is not present in the Greek version, taken by some authors as a gloss (Redford 1970: 32). Without it, the verse would read "*And be the produce, and give a fifth to Pharaoh; and four of a hand be for seed for the field, and for who (is) in your house*". To remove the phrase is to eliminate an emphasis made on the idea that the seed should also feed the Egyptian's little ones[15], leaving alone the idea that the seed is only to produce in the field. However, I consider it important to read the text as it is in the Hebrew Bible, because the presence of the "little ones" can add another aspect to consider in terms of the socio-economic analysis I make. I discuss these three variations in detail later on, and their mention here is to clarify the version of Genesis 47.13-26 I use for this study.

In terms of the "delimitation" of the text, I establish the boundaries on verses 13 and 26. I believe that Genesis 47.13-26 is a story "within a story", which by itself can be seen as an individual text in terms of theme and plot. It narrates the fate of the Egyptians when the famine mentioned in Genesis 41 grows stronger. It also includes a change in the characters and situation, when compared with the verses that surround it, 12 and 27, which belong to the story that narrates Jacob's arrival in Egypt and Joseph's provision for his family. Genesis 47.13-26 has a beginning and an end by itself, narrating a situation that is transformed through a conflict which finally sees its resolution.

Genesis 47.13-26 has been considered an interruption in the wider narrative, being qualified as a text that does not contribute in any aspect to its literary context (see for example Coats 1976: 52-53; Westermann 1986: 67). Even though the text seems to have a different agenda and narrates a new episode in the life of Joseph as Egypt's administrator, some elements connect it to the Joseph story as a whole. Consider, for example, the bread given in 47.12 and absent in 47.13, or the lands given and taken in 47.28 and 47.20-21; in addition, the tenancy and corvée labour established in 47.23-24 and the reference to Rameses and other cities for grain storage in 47.11 and Exodus 1.11-12[16].

In spite of these links, Genesis 47.13-26 has elements to stand alone and therefore to be analysed on its own. Since it is in the middle of one account about Jacob and almost at the end of the Joseph story, it could be thought that the person who introduced the narrative here considered that the story of Joseph in Egypt was incomplete, if the fate of the Egyptians under his administration was

[15] This would be an addition, and the other section a variation that we need to explain.
[16] Brett (2000: 130) explores this final connection.

omitted. He just added one more episode to what has been considered a composite narrative.

1.2 Structure:

The structure of a text is an important part of the construction of meaning, and therefore it needs to be taken into account in the process of interpretation. As Walsh (2009: 108) points out, "…discerning the organization of the text is an important step in understanding and interpreting it." Perceiving the structure contributes to establish the "link between two separate points in a text" (Walsh 2009: 108), which when put together function to convey meaning. In this regard, Olson (2010: 13) offers an interesting input when dealing with "the overall plot of a biblical narrative" when asking "…how does a particular scene or episode fit within it?" Turning points in the narrative, like a change of setting and characters, a transition from a dialogue to a narration, or the movement from one situation to another, can become part of one section within the structure of a story. In terms of Genesis 47.13-26, I construct the story following the movement of situations on one specific 'character', the Egyptians. The story's structure can be organized in the following way:

a) The Egyptians have no bread due to a famine: 47.13.
b) The Egyptians lose all their silver and cattle: 47.14-17
c) The Egyptians lose their land and become slaves: 47.18-22
d) The Egyptians are trained in the dynamics of taxation and land tenancy: 47.23-25
e) The Egyptians have to pay a new tax to the Pharaoh: 47.26.

The story works around one central situation narrated in verses 18-22. In this section, the Egyptians ask for Joseph's help in order to avoid starvation; Joseph, who represents the ruling class, responds by taking their land and making them slaves. Putting this scene in the middle, as a complication, suggests that the intended author is reflecting both on the vulnerability of most of the population before those who rule and also on the ruler's actions in the middle of a crisis. The question in verse 19, which in my opinion is central to the narrative, is raised because of two reasons: the Egyptians' need of bread and Joseph's grabbing of silver and cattle, events narrated in sections one (13) and two (14-17) of the structure. In addition, the question in verse 19 motivates further actions of the government, which establishes a system of land tenancy and taxation in order to "preserve the lives" of the people (see sections 4 and 5 of the structure). I believe that the story reflects on the people's critical situation, and that the question in verse 19 becomes a denunciation of a state that has impoverished and enslaved the population. Sections 1-2 and 4-5 are intimately connected to section 3 and contribute to the impact it produces on the reader.

Verse 13, the first episode of the story, functions as exposition, presenting the situation of the Egyptians. In literary terms, the exposition is a first moment where the plot enjoys relative stability (Walsh 2009: 14). The narrator says that the famine still (because the story seems to be connected with Genesis 41.55-56) affects the land of Egypt and Canaan severely. Consequently, the people do not have food to eat. This verse stands alone, since it explains the conditions in the world of the story, providing its setting (famine, land of Egypt and Canaan), some of the characters, and the problem to be solved. The information it offers also serves as a contrast to the resolution of the story. In verse 26, the Egyptians have been "saved" from the famine due to the intervention of the state. Their condition will change through the complication of the narrative events until the story ends with the Egyptians' obligation to pay "the fifth" of their produce to Pharaoh. In this first section there are no actions, and the narrator is the only one who intervenes to introduce the story.

The second situation in the story, which starts the movement to the narrative's complication, goes from verses 14 to 17. The complication, in narrative analysis, is the moment of tension in the story, characterized by destabilization (Walsh 2009: 14). This section introduces the main characters and also contains one of the two central questions of the narrative. Joseph and the people of Egypt and Canaan enter into action, speaking and doing. This little section, in itself, has exposition, complication and resolution of a small conflict. People have no bread because Joseph has it. People have no silver because Joseph has gathered it. Now, to survive, the Egyptians give their cattle in exchange for food, and the section ends with the people surviving the severe famine for a year. The central moment of this section is the question, in verse 15: Shall we die before your eyes if the silver has ceased? It expresses the uncertainty of the Egyptians about their future without food, silver and cattle. The question responds to Joseph's actions. He has grabbed ***all*** the people's cattle and money and taken them to the Pharaoh's house in exchange for bread. This is a little section in itself, with the beginning of a situation and a momentary resolution, as I have just pointed out. But Joseph's measures work for only one year. This reference closes the section at this point, and at the same time connects it with the following one, which mentions the setting to do the transition.

What I consider the central situation in the story occurs from verse 18 to 22. This is the second part of the complication that began in the previous section, and corresponds to the climax of the narrative. There is a new setting signalled by the mention of a change of year (See Malbon 1992: 30-31), but although new events happen, the structure of the situation follows the pattern in section two. Once again the Egyptians (the Canaanites have been absent since verse 15) run out of food and come to Joseph begging for help, and again the situation is solved with the Egyptians paying a high price; this time they give their lands and their own bodies in exchange for food. They now belong to Pharaoh. In

this section, the Egyptians ask, what I consider to be, the second central question. It follows the same structure as that in verse 15, but this time in verse 19, they ask "why shall we die before your eyes, we and our lands?" The Egyptians offer their bodies and lands to be Pharaoh's possessions, and Joseph accepts the deal.

This is the central moment of the story for certain reasons. First of all, the Egyptians become slaves and their lands are given to Pharaoh, events that are emphasized at the end of the story through the establishment of land tenancy and the tax system in sections four and five. Secondly, it is important to notice that in section two the Egyptians lost all their money and cattle. They were dispossessed, but not in the magnitude that they are now, since, at this moment they have lost their independence and ancient land. The events in scene three are a consequence of those in section two and the reason for the ones in section four. They narrate how the problem of the famine is definitively solved, a solution that is celebrated as "salvific" in section four, celebration that rhetorically undermines the narrative as a whole. This third section finishes with the exemption offered to the priests, who do not sell their lands or become slaves, as occurs with the other Egyptians.

The fourth moment of the story is a dialogue between Joseph and the Egyptians, being the beginning of the resolution of the story. In narrative terms, resolution is considered as the moment where stability is reached again (Walsh 2009: 24). It describes the conditions of the agreement and the Egyptians' duties as Pharaoh's slaves. In this section as well, the Egyptians accept their enslavement and call it a "salvation" they enjoy for finding favour in Joseph's eyes. This is the consequence of the events that begin in verse 14, which find resolution in verse 25, where all of what they were and had is now in Pharaoh's hands. The story finishes at this moment, and verse 26 represents a little summary of what has occurred. I consider that this end generates a feeling of dislocation when the phrase "you preserved our lives" and the word "grace" are referred to as Joseph's institutionalization of tax and enslavement of the Egyptians. The dialogue ends with the words of the Egyptians, and it is very significant that their last intervention in the story is to embrace and show thankfulness for their enslavement and dispossession of ancient lands.

The fifth and last section in the narrative's structure is composed by verse 26. This verse is the final part of the resolution of the story, working as the outcome and explaining the results of what has happened in the narrative. "The fifth of the produce is for Pharaoh", Joseph says, and the only ones who actually are "saved" from this policy are the priests. The first who acts in the story is Joseph, as recorded in verse 15, and the one who speaks at the end is this same character. These elements possibly suggest it is he who has control of all the events that take place.

The structure outlined above gives clues to understanding what I consider to be the central point of the story, which focuses on denouncing the unjust socio-economic measures of those in power. It is based on the dynamics of transaction that occur in the text. This structure allows readers to see in more detail the socio-economic aspects of the story related here especially to slavery and tax. The third section, right in the middle of the narrative, emphasizes the loss of land and autonomy, situations that go against central narratives in the Hebrew Bible such as the Exodus, where land and emancipation from dominators are God's gifts to the people. The question, "Why shall we die in front of you, we and our lands?" is very important because it introduces the discussion around possibly unjust socio-economic dynamics and also shows how economically vulnerable Egyptians, and those represented by this character, can be.

The structure discussed above can be organized as a chiasm. Sections "a" and "e" narrate the change in the situation, which begins with a famine and ends up with a perpetual and structural solution to such famine through a taxation system. People living under taxation and tenancy are eventually impacted by the poverty they create, as the story shows in the case of the Egyptians. The story could be proposing, therefore, that the system solves the problem, actually becoming a structural creator of famines. Parts "b" and "d" point out the introduction of the Egyptians into the structural mechanisms of impoverishment. The state, through Joseph, first takes their silver and cattle, and ends up creating a perpetual tax. Section "c", and its question for survival, engages with oppressing actions of the rulers through a structural socio-economic organization based on tenancy. In summary, the story narrates how the Egyptians find the bread they need, although they have to give silver, cattle, land and autonomy to acquire it. They face a new reality: they will have to work what used to be their lands, in order to pay tribute to the Pharaoh, who has taken the chance given by the famine to extend his dominion over the population.

1.3. Setting:

The question of "setting" in a narrative analysis deals with the literary functions of time and space in a story. It focuses on the "where and when" and engages with the "spatial and temporal references" of texts (Malbon 1992: 30-31). Setting is part of the meaning of the story, and contributes by reinforcing the ideas that are transmitted in the text. Malbon (1992: 31) mention how settings "form the background for the dramatic action" in a story, participating "in the drama of the narrative." Settings have meaning in themselves, and their connotations are tools used to transmit the story. Malbon (1992: 31) state that, "Places and times are rich in connotational, or associative, values, and these values contribute to the meaning of the narrative…"

In Genesis 47.13-26, setting has to be considered in order to understand the messages in the narrative, specifically when the focus is on the dynamics of socio-economic oppression. Verse 13 contains the first reference to setting when it mentions the place that is affected by the famine. According to the narrator, the lands of Egypt and Canaan are suffering from a heavy hunger which has put their population's survival at risk. For this reason, Joseph has taxed the people (Genesis 41) and Jacob's family has come down to Egypt (Genesis 46-47). The setting of 47.13-26 is the same as that of the Joseph story, and its literary context, serving as a connection between the two. Places like Canaan are also mentioned throughout the story, but play a secondary role, disappearing when the story moves (Canaan disappears after verse 15a).

On different occasions, the book of Genesis tells about a famine affecting Canaan, for example, in the times of Abraham (12.10) and Isaac (26.1). In these narratives, interestingly, Egypt appears as a place that offers food. However, in both references the narrators seem to be suspicious and consider this place negatively. In the first account, Abraham does not trust Egypt's population and fears being killed. In the second one, God prohibits Isaac going to Egypt for food. These examples can offer grounds to argue that Canaan and Egypt connect through the motif of famine in the book of Genesis. The stories show certain mistrust of seeking refuge in Egypt during a famine, which becomes interesting for a theological exploration of the role of Egypt in the book. In verses 14-15, for example, Joseph takes all the silver of Canaan. I believe that this event is part of Egypt's literary construction in the story, showing how it dominates other places and extracts revenue from them.

The narrator describes Egypt and Canaan as places where there is no bread, and therefore, the famine reigns (verse13). Such statement, however, is not totally true, since Egypt has bread, although a signal of injustice is that it is not for everyone, since it is stored in Pharaoh's barns[17]. Egypt's rulers have food and "share" it only with those who can afford it (verse14). Egypt is a place that has food, as stated in Chapters 41.54 and 42.1; because of the Nile, Egypt is considered, in most of the Old Testament tradition, as a place of abundance[18]. In Genesis 13.10, for example, the narrator compares Zoar with the Garden of the Lord and with the land of Egypt, putting the two places on a parallel level, probably in a positive sense. However, Egypt is compared to Zoar, connected to Sodom and Gomorrah, archetypes of injustice. People like Abraham and Isaac look for refuge in Egypt in times of distress. Nevertheless, very interestingly, Egypt also seems to represent a place of danger. In the Old Testament tradition, Egypt is the place of oppression and slavery (Exodus 1.8-14). Because of these structures, it

[17] Coote and Ord (1989: 75) describe Egypt as an unjust place since it is characterized by using corvée to build food storage cities.

[18] Ryken, L., Wilhoit J. and Longmann III, T. (1998: 3290) describe Egypt as a place of abundance and power.

becomes a socio-political model to avoid, representing the contrary of what Israel has to be[19] (Deuteronomy 5.15; 10.19; 15.15).

Egypt, as an oppressive setting, is the one that seems to be emphasized in Genesis 47.13-26. Joseph comes to Egypt (Genesis 39), is assimilated (chapter 41.37-46a), and assumes an economic model that promotes dispossession (41.46-49, 54-57 and 47.13-26). In Genesis 47.13-26, Egypt is a place of pain and loss for its own population. Joseph, as representative of this state, has taken *all* from them (47.15 and 17), and has put them in a situation where they will continue being used for Pharaoh's benefit (47.23-26). This represents an interesting contrast to what happens to Jacob's family, at least in their first contact with Egypt, since this place becomes the land that has offered them a second chance to live, and live well (46-47.1-12 and 27). However, this abundance is momentary, since Egypt again plays its exploitative and oppressive role a few chapters later, when Jacob's descendants cry for the oppression they will suffer there (Ex 3.7-8a).

Some authors (Von Rad 1961: 410; Westermann 1986: 176-177; Loader 1988: 102) believe that the usage of Egypt as a setting in Genesis 47.13-26 responds to the interest of the Solomonic court in the political organization of such a state. Westermann (1986: 29-30) proposes that the Joseph story's writers in Solomon's time admire Egypt and its institutions, and that this is the reason why such land is used as a setting and is portrayed very positively. In spite of Westermann's argument, I am not very sure that Egypt's portrayal in the story is so positive. Instead, I propose that Genesis 47.13-26 is very ambiguous and that Egypt could be pictured as an oppressive place when the living conditions of the Egyptians are considered. Solomon's kingship, for example, practiced oppressive socio-economic measures against the people of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12). Any correlation between the two courts could only increase the image of suffering and dispossession they brought to their people. To use Egypt as a setting could suggest that the implied author is dealing with a reality of injustice and oppression.

Within the main setting that Egypt represents, other small settings can be considered in the narrative. One of them is the city which, in biblical narratives, also represents an archetype of the unjust society[20]. Verse 21 has as one of its possible translations the phrase "*and they (the Egyptians) were caused to pass to the cities"*. Joseph's dispossession of the land and his enslavement of the Egyptians equals moving them to the cities. For the Egyptians, therefore, living in the city means to lose their land and to be dominated by the powerful, as they experienced in verses 19 and 20. They and their lands belong to Pharaoh, and the movement changes their condition from independence, land ownership and

[19] Ryken, L., Wilhoit J. and Longmann III, T. (1998: 3291) mention Egypt as the representation of bondage and oppression and the contrast of what Israel has to be.
[20] See West (2011: 515), where he states that, "there cannot be city-state without economic extraction."

dignity to total submission and domination. Moving to the city means an introduction to a system of oppression through taxation and servitude. The city is the place where the Egyptians will experience the dominion and control of the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Verse 21 implies that living in the city is to become an object destined to be exploited and impoverished by those in power.

Negative assumptions appear as well, when the role of the city in the book of Genesis is explored. The first person to build a city in Genesis is Cain[21] (4.17), who is cursed by God and cast out of his presence. The second reference is to Nimrod, son of another coursed person, Cam, and founder of the city of Babel (Genesis 10.10). This account is very interesting, since Nimrod is called a "rABGI", or "mighty/soldier", having Egypt as a relative and being related also to Assur, founder of Nineveh. Nimrod, the mighty city-builder is connected to three empires of the Ancient Near East that struck Israel and imposed socio-economic domination on their vassals. The other reference to a city in Genesis 11.1-8, is in the narrative that refers to the Babel Tower. The story tells how the building of this city was not completed due to God's intervention. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19) and Dina's rape in Sechem (Genesis 34) can give a wider image of the danger represented by the cities. So, when the Egyptians in Genesis 47.13-26 "were caused to pass to the cities", this meant a process of impoverishment, exploitation and detriment to their quality of life, ideas reinforced in the traditions found in the same book of Genesis.

Pharaoh's house is another important setting mentioned in Genesis 47.13-26. This house is the one that receives all of what Joseph takes from the people in verse 14. The Pharaoh's house, probably located in the centre of the city, is related to the other settings ("the land of Egypt" and "the cities") in its relation to oppression, extraction, and accumulation. "The Pharaoh's house" represents the injustice, not only in the way oppression comes out of it, to subdue the people; It also becomes a place where powerful circles meet, such as officers like Joseph or the religious elites who, with Pharaoh, legitimate each other and benefit through the people's misfortunes (Genesis 47.22 and 26). Oppression and injustice flow in and out of the house of Pharaoh, similar to the city he represents and the land he governs, which are full of socio-economic exploitation. From this place, the system of taxation becomes a statute. When, in verse 26, Joseph says, "One fifth for Pharaoh", the connection between these three settings becomes evident, since they work together to promote an oppressive system. The setting, the place where events occur, identifies closely with oppression and abuse[22].

[21] One of Cain's descendants, Irad, contains in his name the word *Ir*, which resembles the temple-palace-grain-storage centre carried in the word *city* (Coote and Ord 1989: 78).

[22] Coote and Ord (1989: 73) points out how the cities consisted basically of the palace (housing the royal and military aristocracy), the temple (part of the legitimation of the economic system), and the prime grain storage facilities. This description offers a very interesting connection between the city and the royal and religious house, very typical in Egypt.

The three settings mentioned earlier, serve to outline Joseph's path from his house in Canaan to his rise as Egypt's governor. Joseph comes from Canaan to Egypt, from the country to the city, from his house to Pharaoh's. The Egyptians' path in the story resembles Joseph's path. They go from their homes to Egypt's central power, since they too come from their country areas of the land of Egypt, arriving at the cities, and finally at Pharaoh's house. Both Joseph and the Egyptians experience city life, and are treated as objects doing others' will (Genesis 39-40 and 47.14-25). Finally, after being in the city, both are assumed over by Pharaoh (41.39-46 and 47.23a). Egyptians are put into a miserable life by Pharaoh's oppressive socio-economic system based on taxation and slavery. Joseph is destroyed by his assimilation into Pharaoh's house, becoming one of those who are responsible for the machinery of oppression against others, acting in Pharaoh's favour. Altogether, land, city and house play a decisive role in the fate of Joseph and the Egyptians. Joseph is victim and victimizer of the system; the people are the victims of all those in power. Egypt has taken all of the people in two years, and the inaugurated system is the ruler's tool to make sure that the extraction continues perpetually. Egypt is the place that legitimates injustice, where the taxation and land tenure system are the only way to "save" the people.

Authors like Speiser (1964: 353) and Westermann (1986: 176-177), propose that Genesis 47.13-26 refers positively to the origin of a taxation system in Egypt. However, I consider that Egypt is an image connected with the genesis of structural oppression, and therefore its usage expresses not praises but rejections and critiques. Moreover, such a genesis of the oppressive system reflects the intended author's reflection on Egyptian and Israelite actions, in the persons of Egypt as land and Pharaoh as king, on one hand, and in Joseph as the Israelite creating an extractive economic system, on the other. Is the story comparing Egypt and the situation of legitimized extraction with the reality of (an) Israelite context? I think so, and the challenge is to trace what could be the historical moment in ancient Israel and Judah that can fit into the description of Genesis 47.13-26.

Besides place, time plays an important role in terms of setting. I refer in two ways to the dimension of time in this narrative. The first one is related to the time when the events occur in the narrative, the time of famine (verse 13), which is one of the "temporal references" in the text (Malbon 1992: 31). Referenced in the first verse of the section, it makes a connection with the other parts of the Joseph story, especially 41.54-57, which narrates the beginning of the situation of famine affecting Egypt and Canaan. After narrating Joseph's encounter with his family (Genesis 42-47.1-12), the author seems interested in finishing the story of the Egyptians that began in 41.54-55. Genesis 47.13-26 can be understood as a second episode of such an encounter or also as a detailed description of what happened at that moment. Famine evokes a situation of vulnerability, causing a severe hunger in all the

land. The story not only emphasises the situation suffered by the Egyptians, but evidences how Joseph manipulates it to take advantage of them. He takes all their possessions, makes them slaves and legitimates the establishment of a structural oppressive system through taxation.

The famine seems to be a literary element that also plays a role in denouncing Joseph's impoverishment of the Egyptians. All that happens to the Egyptians acquires a different connotation, since their dispossession is only possible due to the pressure that the famine has on them. The solution to the famine is through slavery and exploitation (Genesis 47.25-26). Only two years pass during which the people experience a total change in their situation: from owners to owned, from independent producers to Pharaoh's producers, from independence to dependence, from country life to city life. The story seems to emphasize that Joseph preserved the life of the people. However, a famine by natural causes could become a famine that occurs due to a structural socio-economic system.

Those who rule in Egypt, the city and the Pharaoh's house create a system with the potency to create famines. The context of famine, therefore, matches perfectly with the other settings, functioning to denounce the dynamics of oppression in the story. It highlights the injustice of the rulers, who take advantage of the vulnerability of the Egyptians to dispossess them. Some sections of the Old Testament criticize the action of taking advantage of those in need. According to some Old Testament prescriptions, for example, land cannot be sold in perpetuity especially when a person needs help due to economic distress. Also, perpetual slavery and interest-loans were prohibited (see Clevenot 1985: 32-33; Horsley 2009: 28, 39, 41, 43-44; and texts like Isaiah 5.8). In the light of texts like this, Joseph's dispossession of the Egyptians in the middle of a critical situation would be strongly censured.

The second way to look at time in the story is related to the movement of time in the story events. Time, in the narrative, is one of the instruments used to construct the story's messages. The construction of time within the story is functional and contributes to the character, meanings and values of the whole narrative (Bar Efrat 2003: 180). In verse 17, for example, the narrator mentions that Joseph's provisions for the Egyptians lasted one year, in a temporal reference that serves not only to show that the Egyptian's problem is not solved but also to connect one scene with the one that comes after. The way the narrator tells the story, that is, the moments where he describes situations carefully or the events that he mentions rapidly, also belong to the dimension of time. In this regard, Bar Efrat (2003: 181) mentions that the narrator decides what elements to include and omit, what to narrate at a fast pace and where to narrate slowly, according to the importance of the different themes. This can be seen in Genesis 47.13-26. The narrator, for example, mentions very quickly the passing of time when the Egyptians have bread (verse 17), using only half a verse to narrate this moment. However, he takes his time to narrate the encounters between Joseph and the Egyptians (verses 15-17), and describes

with great detail what Joseph takes from the people (verses 14, 16, 21). In terms of time, the narrator slows down at the moment where all the cattle are transferred to Pharaoh, or when the people are taken to the cities or made slaves. Bar Efrat mentions how important this time game is, since time in the story also creates tension or influences the reader's position (Bar Efrat 2003: 181). In the examples cited, relating to the money, the cattle, and the movement to the cities, the narrator's slowing down seems a strategy to show with great detail the suffering of the Egyptians under Joseph's hands.

The characters of the narrative interact in different places and at diverse pace, and these settings determine moments where "oppression" seems to be the key element that connects them all in Genesis 47.13-26. After a quick reading of the events in the light of the setting, it could be argued that, Egypt as the place of oppression and its rulers as agents of such activities, do not have mercy on the people, even in the time of famine, the peak of vulnerability. The setting, understood through these lenses, contributes to the criticism of the oppressive reality in the story, and therefore rejects at once its projects of dispossession and impoverishment. A discussion of the characters and their roles in Genesis 47.13-26 follows.

1.4 Characters and Characterization:

In narrative analysis, the questions of both character (the people who inhabit the story, see Walsh 2009: 23) and characterization (how the characters are portrayed in the story by descriptions, actions, direct speeches and silences, see Walsh 2009: 34) can offer interesting insights for the interpretation of texts. There are two groups of characters interacting in Genesis 47.13-26. The main, active ones that are Joseph and the Egyptians, while the secondary ones are the pharaoh and the priest. According to Walsh (2009: 24), main characters are the ones who "…regularly do more, speak more, undergo more, or change more…" Joseph and the Egyptians fit this characterization, since they are the ones who participate actively in the story from the beginning to the end, and who promote and suffer, in one way or another, the major changes in the story. On the other hand, there are the passive, secondary characters, represented by the Pharaoh, the priests and the "little ones", who rarely perform any action in the story, but become necessary to understand, in a deep way, the socio-economic and ideo-theological dynamics in the narrative.

I begin with the Joseph because the narrative studied belongs to the so-called Joseph story (Genesis 37-50), where he is the protagonist. Secondly, he is the character that appears first and talks last in Genesis 47.13-26, and all the attention of the story seems to be interested in highlighting his actions and words, especially when thinking on how he solves a socio-economic problem. Joseph is characterized by his actions and also by his and other characters' and the narrator's words about him in

the story. In terms of his actions and words, as I said before, he is the one who acts first (verse 14) and talks last (verse 26). In this way the narrator shows the importance of this character in the story. Joseph is characterized from the beginning: In the midst of a famine, he *gathers in* (jql) all the silver of the Egyptians and *brings* it to the house of the Pharaoh. Both actions are very important. The first because the verb is very strong, conveying in its meaning that Joseph has done a "complete and total gathering" of the Egyptian's silver in exchange for bread, leaving them with nothing. Joseph's first action, therefore, shows that he is capable of extracting the totality of the Egyptians' possessions in their time of vulnerability. This will be corroborated in verses 20-21. The second action of verse 14 shows what Joseph's real interest is in his actions, since what he has taken from the Egyptians goes to the "house of the Pharaoh".

The one who benefits from this transaction, far from being the Egyptians, is the Pharaoh. This is how Joseph is introduced in the story, presentation that does not really allow readers to imagine a promising outcome. However, this is a very accurate image of the Joseph in Genesis 47.13-26, because he continues with the same behaviour throughout the story. Joseph's actions benefit his lord, the Pharaoh, using cleverly the critical situation of the Egyptians. Joseph's characterization could be part of a point of view that sees him as a negative character. Joseph's next action is in verses 16-17, where he speaks, for the first time, words that are not very encouraging for the Egyptians. He offers them a deal, asking for cattle and in exchange offering food. He takes *all* the working animals of the Egyptians, a phrase that, through the word that denotes totality (lKO), connects his action with the one in verse 14. There is also an interesting reference in verse 17, where commonly the verb "lhn" is translated as "lead carefully, guide or help along"[23], which can give a caring and very committed image of Joseph towards the Egyptians. However, since his previous actions have already caused some suspicion against him, other forgotten possibilities to translate the verb appear. According to Wanke (1994: 731), the word "lhn" could also convey the meanings of "transfer, get in possession, become the owner". In relation to the events in verses 16-17, this could be a clearer description of the unjust actions of Joseph against the Egyptians, saying strongly that he is getting their belongings in exchange for food. Even though the meaning of this verb needs further exploration, the possibility that it can fit in this section increases the negative image that seems to be constructed against Joseph, especially in the relationship to socio-economic injustice and oppression.

Verses 20-22 mention the third encounter between Joseph and the Egyptians (after those in

[23] The New Revised Standard Version uses "supply"; The new English Bible 1972 uses "maintain", New International version puts "bring through"; Speiser (1964: 351) translates "guide and see through".

verses 14 and 16). This is also the next moment when Joseph takes something from them. In this case, he buys the Egyptians and their lands in exchange for bread. Until this point, in all three moments that Joseph has acted in this story, he has taken something from the Egyptians who come to him for help due to their desperate situation. This scene evokes the last one, but also adds to its implications because Joseph takes something more valuable from them. Now, Joseph has "*caused (them) to pass to the cities*" or "*made them slaves*", both versions being equally negative, and reinforcing the problematic image constructed of Joseph's abusing of the people and ruining them in the midst of a vulnerable situation. There is also something interesting in verse 22 that shows Joseph's preferences and power commitments. He buys the Egyptians and their lands, but does not touch anything that belongs to the priests, because they had an arrangement with the Pharaoh. His actions benefit those in power and the aristocratic classes, to which he also belongs, being Pharaoh's second in command (41.40) and also having married the daughter of a priest (41.45).

According to verses 20-22, Joseph has become an enslaver, and his character begins to represent an oppressive and unjust system. Finally, in verses 23-26, Joseph makes a deal with the now enslaved Egyptians, and taking advantage of the circumstances, establishes a perpetual taxation system (that seemed temporary in Genesis 41.34-36), again benefitting the Pharaoh. Joseph is placed here as the one who makes possible the system of tenancy and taxation, an economic organization that is known for being exploitive and oppressive[24]. The last words of the story come from Joseph, although not through direct but indirect speech, since this character speaks through the narrator: "the fifth for Pharaoh!" (verse 26). Now it is clear who the one who benefits from all the events of the story. If Genesis 47.13-26 is read through the lense of socio-economic exploitation, Joseph is the first person responsible and therefore criticized for the wealth of some and the deep poverty and critical situation of the many, as the story shows.

Joseph's characterization, as can be seen, is based on the dispossession of different aspects of the Egyptians' lives (silver, cattle, farmland, bodies) in exchange for something that he took from them by force (the grain stored by Joseph in chapter 41 and as Pharaoh's edict from the brilliant idea of Joseph). There are, however, authors that think that Joseph's actions, from the story's point of view, seem to construct him as a positive character. Speiser (1964: 353), for example, thinks that Joseph' actions are precautionary, especially since they are done in a context of famine, and considering that, in the Egyptian socio-economic organization, the land by law belonged to Pharaoh, blaming Joseph for the injustice would be incorrect and non-objective. Besides, Von Rad (1961: 410-411) considers that the story promotes a positive image of Joseph, who is able to save the people from an enormous

[24] See West's (2011) work on the Tributary Mode of Production and the Temple State.

catastrophe, showing his wisdom at conquering economic difficulties by a shifting of values (changing money for food, manpower and land for seed corn). “It would be a modern idea”, he thinks, to see the Egyptians as too submissive, and, on the other hand, he reinforces the issue that the author of Genesis 47.13-26 is honestly amazed with what happens in the account (Von Rad 1961: 410).

In spite of the “good intentions” of these authors, I think that the story is strong enough in its characterization of Joseph as a negative leader, that trying to “save” him is ignoring the details provided by the narrative. All Joseph’s actions are related to economic transactions that benefit those in power and deeply affect the most vulnerable of the society. So, it is difficult to find “wisdom” or “saving intentions” in such actions, unless the author wants, as I also think, to question the conceptions of wisdom and salvation when they are exercised by those who rule.

Joseph’s oppressive image can be reinforced by what others say about him. The Egyptians go to him asking for help twice, and on both occasions they suffer from dispossession in order to survive (15 and 19). In verse 18 they call him “!Ada'” (master, lord, and owner) even before they propose to him the deal to sell him their lands and offer themselves as slaves. In verses 14, 17, 20-21 and 26, where the narrator tells what Joseph does, the actions are centred in what Joseph takes from the people, how he makes them slaves, and how he establishes the perpetual taxation system. Even though there does not seem to be any clear value judgment from the narrator towards Joseph’s actions, taking a look at what they have in common makes it easy to get the idea of the unjust and oppressive actions of Joseph.

Joseph’s position is also very compromised if readers take a quick look at the literary context. He has always been related to the centres of power, gaining pre-eminence among the others (with Jacob in 37.3-4 and 13-14; with Potiphar in 39.4-5; in Jail in 39.22; and with the Pharaoh in 41.37-42). Therefore, it seems that Joseph’s nature is to serve those in power. Such servitude has given him power and positioned him in a privileged status (control of Potiphar’s house, the jail, Egypt). In terms of political relations, Joseph is absorbed by the Pharaoh and his court, becoming the second in command due to the great idea of taxing the people (Genesis 41.33-45). Moreover, he is also connected to the religious class of Egypt by his marriage to the daughter of a priest (Genesis 41.45). Joseph’s alliances could explain the benefits that Pharaoh and the priests enjoy and the suffering of the common people. In some moments of Genesis 37-50, Joseph is related to the divinity, who is with him in the difficult moments and helps him prosper (Genesis 39. 2, 3, 5 and 21). However, this contact seems to get weaker as the narrative goes on. From the moment Joseph is in the Egyptian court, there is no mention of God’s company (only by Pharaoh’s or his own mouth, in Genesis 41.38-39 and 51-52). A consequence of this is that he needs to use other means to have contact with the divine powers

(Genesis 44.4-5). In addition, just before and after Genesis 47.13-26, Joseph meets Pharaoh and is able to get the best of the land for his family, who gain cattle and prosper in Egypt (Genesis 47.11-12 and 27). This attitude to his family is far from the "help" which he offers to the Egyptians in the same situation of famine. This summary of details about Joseph reinforce, without doubt, the idea that this character can be interpreted more ambiguously than the tradition has imagined, and even reach the point being understood as a negative, oppressive and exploitive role in the account of Genesis 47.13-26.

Furthermore, it is necessary to say that actions like those of Joseph in Genesis 47.13-26 are denounced also by other texts of the Old Testament tradition. Isaiah 5.8[25], for example, is a strong critic of those who "add house to house, join field to field … and are left to dwell alone in the land". Amos, in 2.6 and 4.1-2 also denounces the oppression of the impoverished by those in power: "because you sell the innocent for silver and the destitute for a pair of shoes"[26]. Micah in 2.2 speaks strongly against those who "…covet land and take it by force…and steal every man's inheritance"; Nehemiah in 5.1-5 describes the outcry and difficult situation of the people in a famine, who sell their children and mortgage their lands in order to buy grain. Joseph's actions in the story resemble what is criticized as unjust in the texts mentioned: joining fields, oppressing the impoverished, taking other's inheritance, taking advantage in the midst of famines and other catastrophes.

The Joseph of Genesis 47.13-26 is profoundly related and committed to the project of oppression and exploitation that the narrative describes. It can be said that he is the product of the previous events he has lived. Joseph had been sold as a slave by his brothers (Genesis. 37), sent to jail unjustly (Genesis. 39), forgotten by the Pharaoh's courtiers after helping them (Genesis. 40), and assimilated by the Egyptian state (Genesis. 41). Egypt, the city and the house of Pharaoh, as I explained before in the section of the setting, have influenced Joseph. As character, the Joseph in Genesis 47.13-26 is very different from the one of the chapters before, showing no emotions. In narrative analysis, he would be considered a flat character, since these are the ones that "change little or not at all in the course of the story" (Walsh 2009: 24). Joseph acts almost automatically, having no change in himself. Joseph is exploitative from the beginning to the end, which contributes to the argument that sees the story as a demonstration and criticism of an oppressive socio-economic system.

The Egyptians are the main character in the story. They "act or speak in a variety of situations", and also undergo more changes, characteristics that, for Walsh, are signals of main characters (Walsh

[25] Horsley (2009: 28) thinks that the best way to understand what Isaiah says in this text is to take a look at Joseph's actions against the people in chapter 41 and 47.
[26] New English Bible 1972.

2009: 24). Being a collective, they function and are constructed in opposition to Joseph. They are characterized also by what they say and do, but in addition to that, by what is done to them. As it happens, with Joseph, two of the most interesting mentions related to the Egyptians are in verses 14 and 26. In both cases, the narrator says how Joseph takes something from them. In the first, he takes all their silver, while in the last he establishes that they will pay perpetually a fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh. From the beginning to the end, the Egyptians are exploited by the powers of Egypt, embodied in Joseph. Their actions in the story can be divided into three types. The first one, and also the second, happen twice. playing with the literary tool of repetition, which occurs when the same or slightly varied "event, speech or piece of information is recounted more than once in the text" (Walsh 2009:82), the narrator tells about the encounters between Joseph and the Egyptians. Narrated as if it was a ritual, using the repetition technique, the narrator informs that on two occasions the people gather to go and see Joseph, hoping he is going to help them in their desperate situation due to the famine (15 and 18-19).

The two moments resemble each other because both contain a question that strongly challenges the system of values represented by Joseph and the powers of Egypt: Shall we die before your eyes? More than a question, it seems a statement that denounces the actions of Joseph against the population. Both claim and at the same time critique the violence of the state. Both receive the same response, since the Egyptians have to give, on the two occasions, in order to continue living. However, it is interesting that the two encounters in which the people go to Joseph are slightly different in one aspect. In the first one, it seems that, in terms of point of view, the Egyptians are portrayed as a little bit naïve, approaching Joseph to ask him for help, but not offering him anything in exchange. Joseph's response is clear: "give me cattle and I will give you food" (verse16). This difficult lesson seems to have been learned by the people, since in the second encounter with Joseph they do not come to beg, but to offer him a deal (verse19). They have already tasted Joseph's ways, and by acknowledging them they face the cruel situation they are living in[27]. If verse 14 is included, people encounter Joseph three times. In the first, they lose their silver, in the second their cattle, in the third their lands and freedom.

If their first type of action is to approach Joseph, the second is to give him what they have (bringing and selling it to him). This second type of performance is based on giving something very precious to keep cattle, farmland, and their own bodies alive. After their loss, their third type of action happens. Verse 25 tells how the people celebrate because they have found grace in Joseph's eyes and therefore he has preserved their lives. For a modern reader like myself, this celebration does not really

[27] See Watson's description of this moment (1994: 69).

make sense. The first idea that comes to mind in response to this phrase, from an ideological point of view, is that the Egyptian's are portrayed as having internalized the agenda of those in power, seeing as beneficial a situation that has impoverished them totally and made them slaves. Watson has a similar reaction, arguing that the narrative reflects how the Egyptians are so disoriented by the disaster that they are thankful for the systematic oppression that has been established (Watson 1994: 69). By their actions, their words and Joseph's actions, the people of Egypt are portrayed as those who have experienced a situation of exploitation and dispossession. They have also assimilated a system that tells them that there is no other option but to name slavery as grace. In the words of Watson (1994: 70), this "positive reaction" of the people can only be explained as their attempt to deal with a future that brings too heavy a burden to bear.

The situation of the Egyptians is the one that changes the most in the story (together with the Pharaoh). They were free and independent, owned their ancestral land, and had cattle and silver as a means to live. But suddenly, due to a famine and the help of their government, they are slaves and dependent, work for Pharaoh in what was their land, and have no more resources of their own. The fate of the Egyptians cannot be other than unfortunate. They go to Joseph for help, seeing hope in him, but find abuse and a violent system of extraction. In their second encounter with him, they even call him lord (verse18), which shows how the power relations have changed between them. The people get involved in an oppressive system that makes them believe that their oppression is legitimate, and that Joseph is a figure of salvation and grace. Their experience and final conditions, again, contribute to all that has been discussed here denouncing the scandalous oppressive system represented by Joseph and the Egyptian powers against the mass of the population. The classes are heavily divided here, and since all of Egypt is enslaved by Joseph (verse21), this situation evokes the reality of most of the states of the Ancient Near East, where a very few controlled all the resources, while the many, around 95-98% of the population, lived in misery and served the rulers[28]. The Egyptians' fate, as a consequence, is a part of the voices that criticize and challenge the claims of the salvation of Joseph and the system he represents, uncovering their ravaging greed and destructive mechanisms.

The dispossession of the Egyptians is put as legitimate and legal, but in all senses was abusive and opportunistic. As mentioned before in connection with Joseph's actions, this is also condemned by the Old Testament traditions that advocate for justice. The selling of the land in perpetuity, for example, was sanctioned by Leviticus 25.23, where it is stated that the land belongs to Yahweh and has the quality to be redeemed, being part of the main principles that ruled the moral economy of early Israel (Horsley 2009: 39). This tradition stands against Joseph's actions and therefore denounces the fate of

[28] See Gottdwald (1979: 40).

the Egyptians due to Joseph's economic policies.

The Pharaoh, priests and "little ones" belong to the second group of passive characters that are important to understand the socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions of Genesis 47.13-26. The Pharaoh, as said before, is the one who benefitted by Joseph´s dispossession of the Egyptians. As events happened with Joseph and the Egyptians, he is mentioned in the first and last, benefitting by what happens in verses 14 and 26. 12 times the title Pharaoh is mentioned in the story, all of them connected with what he gets due to Joseph's actions[29]. The final part of the story gives an idea of the agenda of such a narrative from the beginning: to narrate and at the same time legitimize Pharaoh's taxation system. Even though in the story the Pharaoh is only a receptor of Joseph's actions, the narrator also tells of one very important action of Pharaoh, which is related to the socio-economic organization of Egypt. In contrast to what happens with the Egyptians, the priests do not starve nor lose their land, because Pharaoh has created a statute that gives them bread. Such an action is repeated twice, in verses 22 and 26, giving emphasis to the deal they had with Pharaoh and the issue that they did not sell the land because it was separate. The only action of Pharaoh told in the story, therefore, is done to benefit other elite members, the priestly class, probably involved in the legitimation of the state. The priests, therefore, part of this select group also formed by Pharaoh and Joseph, do not suffer any harm in the midst of the famine, and readers could even infer that the bread they eat was that given by the Egyptians in Genesis 41 and sold to them in Genesis 47.13-26.

This connection is very important to highlight, because it shows the configuration of the Egyptian state, formed by the Pharaoh, god-king, and the priests, the owners of the religious system, as happened in many city-states that exploited the people with tribute for the kings and the gods[30]. That the priests eat Pharaoh's bread shows the symbolic status of their situation, since their dependence will make them work for Pharaoh's benefit. Therefore, the oppressive socio-economic system in Egypt, implemented in court through Joseph and the Pharaoh, is extended now to the religious apparatus and the benefits it receives from the exploitation of the population.

The final member of this group of secondary characters appears, according to Redford (1970: 32), in a gloss[31]. They are the little ones, who Joseph mentions in verse 24 as beneficiaries of the produce of the seed he is giving to the Egyptians. Why are they important in the story? Well, assuming that they are children, and that the Egyptians have just been trapped in a taxation system that will

[29] All the silver of the land in verse 14; all the people of the land in verse 19; all the farmland in verse 20; a perpetual tax of a fifth of the produce in verse 24

[30] See West (2011: 522), where he describes how "arable land, the basis for nearly all economic activities on lower Mesopotamia, was owned either by the temple or by the palace".

[31] It is omitted in the LXX. See also Speiser (1964: 352).

probably make them enter into debt, the “little ones” become a good way of paying what is owed to the Pharaoh. In texts like II Kings 4.1-7 and Nehemiah 5.1-5, the children are the ones who pay the debts of their parents, showing the aggressive socio-economic system that impoverished and extracted as much as it could from a person and a family, and at the same time the vulnerability of the next generation, when the first falls into economic distress. The phrase in verse 24, “for your children to eat”, can be a future investment of Joseph’s, knowing that the families will owe him at the point when he will have to take the little ones as slaves.

The characters and characterization, therefore, have also been useful to see the construction of the narrative of Genesis 47.13-26 around an unjust economic system. The relationships of power, abusive in every sense, put the Pharaoh at the top of the pyramid, Joseph and the Priests benefitting from his reign and being channels to exploit the populations, and the Egyptians at the bottom, totally impoverished and dependant, and now even at risk of seeing their next generation share this fate. The narrative portrays Joseph as one who takes, and the Egyptians are the ones who suffer dispossession and economic distress. Seeing the contrast between those who win and those who lose, there is no doubt that the narrative describes, and by this, criticizes an unjust socio-economic system.

1.5. Repetitions:

Emphasis and repetitions of ideas and words are very important in literary documents, because usually they are the instruments used to reinforce the message transmission that is desired. Authors, like Walsh (2009: 82), distinguish between two types of repetition in narrative analysis. He calls “strict repetition” those sections where the same “event, speech, or piece of information is recounted more than once in the text, whether by the narrator or by one or more characters” (Walsh 2009: 82). He also identifies “other repetitions”, which he defines as “…instances where a repeated word, phrase, or idea establishes a link between two otherwise separate and distinct story elements” (Walsh 2009: 82). Both of these, I consider, are used in Genesis 47.13-26, and assume a function to shape the idea of economic exploitation.

The first repetition I want to mention is related to the question raised by the Egyptians to Joseph in the moments when they ran out of bread. In two events that are similarly constructed (first in verse 15, second in verses 18-19), being a strict repetition in Walsh’s words, the narrator tells of how the people, having consumed all the food they have, come to Joseph and challenge him by asking if he will let them die before him. Twice, the narrator shows how the Egyptians are afraid of dying of starvation, and twice they ask Joseph about their future with a question that implicitly makes him responsible for their negative fate. The questions, central in the story, show not only the desperate

situation of the people due to hunger, but also the level of cruelty that the state, represented by Joseph, can reach, since the fear of the people is such that the institution would even see them die in its presence. The only reason this does not happen, the story suggests, is because on the two occasions the people give something to Joseph to avoid death (verses 16 and 19).

It is very interesting that the only word that Joseph pronounces here to help the people, is to ask for something in exchange (verse16), which keeps them from dying. It can be inferred, therefore, that the fear of death by the population is real and that the state, with Joseph at the head, would actually let them die. The only thing that saves them now is that they have cattle, land and their own bodies to pay for their food. The repeated questions in the text emphasize the difficult times experienced by the population and the cruelty and impassivity of the state, which can see someone dying before it without doing anything to stop it. The two questions show the greed of the rulers, who intervene only when they are going to gain something. The question, "Shall we die before you (your eyes)?" therefore, represents a denunciation of the violence of the state against its population and a criticism and ridicule of its discourse as a salvific system (verse 25). It exposes its real purpose of extracting as much as it can from the people and also makes evident the little it cares for those who serve it. The narrator wants to emphasize this, and that is why he puts it in the text twice. He does not want the readers to forget who is seeing them die, while doing nothing. This is seen especially when the response to the second question is to enslave the Egyptians and establish a perpetual system of extraction.

Being "before Joseph" ("dgn<" "before you" 15 and "^yn<©y[el." "before your eyes" 19, which can be considered in Walsh's terms "other repetitions"), as has been mentioned earlier, is everything but positive and graceful. In verse 13 it is mentioned that the lands of Egypt and Canaan "languished…at the face ("ynEßP.mi") of the famine", a phrase really similar to those in verses 15 and 19. Verse 25, in addition, states how the Egyptians rejoice to have found "favour in the eyes or our Lord", but this grace grants them only to be slaves for Pharaoh. There is an interesting repetition of ideas here, and therefore a connection. As Walsh (2009: 81) points out, "repetition establishes a link between two passages, potentially endowing each with a new significance from its connection to the other". I consider that verses 13, 15, 19 and 25 are connected through this type of repetition. Through this literary tool, Joseph is put on the same level as the famine, since the people of Egypt are already suffering before them both. Joseph and the famine are both a cause of distress and suffering for the people, and even in this comparison Joseph has the most negative part, since he could bring relief to the situation of the population, but declines to do it if he cannot get anything in exchange.

The cruelty of the extraction that the state, in Joseph's hands, obtains from the population is strengthened by the repetition of the terms that tell of the possessions it takes away. The word "hm'd'a]"[32], which occurs in the story and refers to one of the most precious elements in ancient times[33], is taken by Joseph to be Pharaoh's property although worked by the people as tenants (verses 24 and 26). However, the repetition has an interesting contrast. When the word is related to the Egyptians, it is to say that the land has been lost (verse19 three times; verse20 once; verse22 one time; verse23 twice; verse26 once), but when the reference is connected to the priests, it is to say that they have kept it (verses 22 and 26). The ten times it appears in the story possibly shows the importance of the land for the people and for Joseph, and for the Pharaoh and the priests, and the reiterated presence of such an element increases also the size of the dispossession suffered by the Egyptians in favour of those who rule the country. Something similar happens to the word "hn<q.mi", which means livestock or cattle, which appears seven times in three verses (without the other words such as sWs, rq'B', rAmx] and so on), narrating in all cases what Joseph asks for and takes in exchange of bread. Verse 17 is especially interesting because it repeats the word adding a specific reference to the animals Joseph has taken for food. This slow "parade" of animals from the Egyptians' houses to Joseph's hands seems to emphasize all the possessions Joseph has gained due to the disgraceful situation of the land.

Other repetitions contribute so that the story as a whole becomes a narrative of socio-economic exploitation. Three times it is mentioned that the events happen in a time of famine (verse14 and verse 20), and three words show how hard it is against the population ("dbeK'" and "daom." in verse 13 and "qzx" in verse 20). On six occasions the narrator says that Joseph has taken *all* the silver of Egypt (verses 14, 15, 16 and 18), while in another six he mentions the need that the Egyptians have for food (verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 19). On two occasions the narrator shows where all their belongings go in order to find food to eat (verses 14 and 20, to 'the house of' Pharaoh), while two other moments emphasize the new condition of the population, who have become slaves in order to save their lives (verses 19, 21, 23, and 25). This aspect is contrary to the two accounts that tell about the statutes made in favour of the priests, who live by Pharaohs provision and keep their land (verses 22 and 26). On two other occasions there is a word of celebration to Joseph due to the actions he has done (verse 25, "hyx" as, preserve or keep alive, and "!xe acm" as, show favour and grace).

[32] The human being comes from here. It belongs to Yahweh (Lev 25.23).
[33] See Ploger (1974: 89-93).

Finally, on two more occasions Joseph's statute to give the fifth of the produce to the Pharaoh is described (verses 24 and 26). These repetitions emphasize the situation of injustice experienced by the Egyptians and promoted by Joseph and Egypt's rulers, and with them it seems that the author wants his readers to keep in mind the oppressive and exploitative reality in which the Egyptians are living.

1.6 Point of View:

The last element I engage with, in terms of literary analysis, is point of view. As Walsh (2009: 43) points out, narrative point of view asks how the narrator tells the story, since this particularity will influence the way the narrative influences the opinion or perception of the reader. To perceive the point of view of the story is to understand a great deal of the possible rhetorical messages that are to be transmitted. As mentioned in the introduction, the point of view in Genesis 47.13-26, even though it is not that easy to discern, becomes one central element in the task of understanding the possible ideo-theological and socio-economic interests in the story. According to Walsh (2009: 43), the narrative's point of view can be discerned by different elements of a story. This author maintains that to perceive the point of view one of the important aspects is to pay attention to, "…how the narrator manipulates our sense of space and time in the story…" (Walsh 2009: 43). This element, which refers to the story's setting, has already been discussed here, and it is important to construct an argument around the narrative's message and therefore its point of view. Besides, Walsh considers it important to look at "…how the narrator uses the complex possibilities of language and silence to layer meanings in the story, and, finally, ways in which the narrator's own presence and voice can influence the reader's experience of the narrative" (Walsh 2009: 43). Of these two elements, I have not mentioned the silences of the story, but have talked about how the narrator constructs the characters, organizes his narrative and uses repetition and key terms to tell the story.

Walsh, using the analogy of a movie camera, argues that "The director (read "narrator") positions the camera (read "establishes the point of view") from which you view the action" (Walsh 2009: 44). In that sense, I have argued that the narrator makes his reader pay close attention to what Joseph does and to what the Egyptians experience. Therefore, we can say with Walsh (2009: 44) that the narrator's point of view decides what can and cannot be seen, and also determines what is central and peripheral (Walsh 2009: 44). As such, elements like repetition are important to understand the narrator's point of view, for example, when on different occasions he tells how the Egyptians come to negotiate with Joseph, always giving him something important for their survival in exchange for bread. I think that by allowing us to see Joseph dispossessing the Egyptians and also by showing us the Egyptians being enslaved and taxed, the narrator is telling us what is central for his story.

However, even though, in my opinion, Joseph's actions and the Egyptians' dispossession is central, it is difficult to discern if the narrator is "in favour" or "against" what occurs in the story. In certain narratives, understanding the position of the narrator, its point of view, is not that difficult. In 2 Samuel 11.27b, for example, the narrator tells that what David has done is wrong before Yahweh's eyes. Such intervention could be used to argue that the narrator's point of view is against David's actions. However, Walsh mentions that some narratives have, what can be called, a neutral point of view, arguing that "neutral external… (is when)…The reader sees and hears only what any neutral observer would see and hear…" (Walsh 2009: 45). I consider that the narrator in Genesis 47.13-26 belongs to this neutral form, only allowing his audience to see and hear in an apparently neutral perspective. Besides using elements of character, setting, plot, and repetition to tell the story, the narrator does not intervene in any other way to express his opinion about the events that occur.

This ambiguity of the point of view, given this apparent neutrality of the narrator, provides the grounds to argue that, using elements of characterization, repetition, structure and setting, the narrator is actually showing his point of view. As I have argued, these elements together would function to propose that the narrator's point of view is intent on showing the unjust and exploitative socio-economic system that Joseph represents. All the elements studied here are part of the point of view, and are used to show the position of the one who narrates the story.

I have discussed some of the elements of the literary level of Genesis 47.13-26. Through the structure, setting, characterization, repetitions and point of view of the text, I argue that the narrative is dealing with socio-economic oppression, blaming those in power who exploit and impoverish the people in the midst of a vulnerable situation. The literary level, therefore, highlights Joseph's unjust actions against the Egyptians and criticizes the means he uses to "save them from the famine". The question "Shall we die before your eyes?" is representative of such a critique. It can be contrasted to Joseph's characterization in verse 25, presented as one who "preserves life" and "shows grace", which implies that Joseph saves the Egyptians by enslaving and taxing them for Pharaoh's benefit. The tone of the story becomes an ironic and sarcastic.

2.Socio-Historic analysis of Genesis 47.13-26:

After a detailed reading of the story, it is clear that certain socio-economic and ideo-theological elements are problematized in it. Issues of land possession, property, taxation, economic oppression, slavery, city life, power relations, religious and political legitimation, among others, become central elements of the narrative, and the goal of this second section is to try to reconstruct the world behind the story that is reflected through such aspects.

The path I follow for this has four components. In the first I discuss the character of the text per se, its literary form, the role it plays in the literary context where it has been situated, and the discussions around its content. The second refers to the different aspects of the composition of the text, such as the place and time of writing, and also the possible authorship. The third moment is intended to reflect on the socio-economic dimensions of the narrative, focusing on the issues of land, property, taxation and slavery, centred in the tributary mode of production[34]. The last moment discusses the ideological and theological interests perceived in the narrative and its connection to its economic dimension. The idea is to confirm or deny if what is discovered in the narrative analysis, that Genesis 47.13-26 depicts an unjust socio-economic system that is criticized by the poverty it promotes, can be sustained by the socio-historic possibilities of the text.

2.1. The text of Genesis 47.13-26:

Genesis 47.13-26 has provoked many discussions around the type of literary unit it represents, the role it plays within the Joseph story, and the possibilities around the diverse versions of its text. In the first case, many authors (Westermann 1986: 173; Von Rad 1961: 411; Coats 1976: 52-53) agree that Genesis 47.13-26 is an aetiology[35] that explains the origin of a taxation system. Some of them claim that such an explanation responds to the Egyptian context (Coats 1976: 52-53), although as I describe later, my thesis is that the text is connected to the reality of Israel-Judah and therefore explains the origin of the implementation of a taxation system within that land.

Genesis 47.13-26 is located almost at the end of the story of Joseph, right in the middle of an account that talks about Jacob's settlement in Egypt. Some authors (Westermann 1986: 167, 173, and 176; Redford 1970: 2; Watson 1994: 71) consider that this "strange" position in the narrative shows that the text is an appendix or later addition to the Joseph story, not part of the older composition where it has been placed. Scholars like Westermann (1986: 173) and Coats (1976: 53 and 1983: 299[36]) believe that Genesis 47.13-26, in its character of an appendix, has no connection with its literary context, and that it even interrupts what is being told. The first impression, therefore, in terms of Genesis 47.13-26, is that it does not belong to the main corpus of the Joseph story, and that it has been added to the account for an unidentifiable purpose. However, some authors have found connections with this section and the Joseph story. Von Rad, Coats and Watson think that Genesis 47.13-26 clearly resembles Genesis 41. Von Rad (1961: 408) claims that Wellhausen had already seen such connection, and discusses whether Genesis 47.13-26 could have originally come after chapter 41, as its continuation, or

[34] Explained in Chapter three of the Thesis
[35] An aetiology, in the words of Westermann (1986: 173), is when "a current practice is explained from an event of the past".
[36] He even thinks that the story, where it is now, is "isolated and extraneous to the overall story".

if Genesis 41.55 could be considered the exposition of the section studied here (Genesis 47.13-26). Coats (1983: 300) considers that having Genesis 47.13-26 as an appendix shows the intention to avoid losing such a narrative. The question then is what the intention was to keep this story where it has been placed.

Finally, Watson (1994: 71) offers a very interesting argument to explain why Genesis 47.13-26 is placed separate from Genesis 41. He states that the reason for this separation is related to the political interests of the narrative, and that having Genesis 47.13-26 just after Genesis 41 would highlight "the oppressive nature of Joseph's wisdom, especially because what is about to come is the narration of the manipulation of the brothers (Watson 1994: 71). Watson's understanding of the literary context of Genesis 47.13-26 contributes greatly to an ideological reading of this passage, especially when he mentions that the strategic position that this account has is to avoid any connection of Joseph with economic oppression (Watson 1994: 71). Even though it has been said that Genesis 47.13-26 was included in the Joseph story, as an inclusion with no influence on the main narrative, the connections with chapter 41 and the suspicions around a possible apology in favour of Joseph contribute to the argument I want to build around Joseph's unjust socio-economic system.

In terms of textual criticism, the discussions to define the "original" text of Genesis 47.13-26 have some main points that need to be elaborated. First of all, it is important to mention the uncommon condition of the expression "'~x,L,'B; ~leÛh]n:y>w:" in verse 17b, which Von Rad (1961: 409) considers as "very curious." He states that this phrase, which he translates as *"lead the people with bread",* is used only for leading flocks, and that unless it is an ancient error, the idea conveyed is that Joseph brings the masses through carefully (Von Rad 1961: 409). Already mentioned in section 1.1.1 is how this phrase, and specially its verb, can have a different, negative, connotation, suggesting that Joseph "*became the owner with bread*" of the cattle of the Egyptians. This reference is very interesting, not only due to the discussion it causes, but also because of the different and contrary meanings that the translation can contain. "*Lead the people with bread*" gives a positive image of Joseph as a caring shepherd leading his flock, but when read in terms of who becomes owner out of bread, the person of Joseph does not seem caring or protective at all. The phrase "*so your children eat*"[37] in verse 24b is also another "obscure" text in Genesis 47.13-26. Besides being difficult to read, this section happens to be absent in the LXX. This makes some authors doubt its original connection to the passage (Speiser 1964: 352; Redford 1970: 32). Redford (1970: 32) understands it as a gloss that

[37] Translated by Redford as "and as food for the children" (Redford 1970: 32)

tries to clarify the meaning of the previous phrase, "*and for food*, *and for who (is) in your house*[38]", stating that the function of such glosses is to "explain specific, rare, words or phrases" found in the texts.

However, I follow the Masoretic text and include this reference in my translation, especially since I believe that it plays an important role when it comes to the discussion about socio-economic exploitation and the place that children and second generations play in it. Besides these interesting characteristics of the ancient manuscripts of Genesis 47.13-26, verse 21 offers a peculiar variation not only for textual criticism, but also for socio-economic issues. In this verse the tradition of the Masoretic text includes the phrase usually translated as "*(the people) were caused to pass to the cities*"[39]. However, the LXX[40] and the Samaritan Text[41] seem to follow a different Hebrew tradition that would read "reduced them to serfs" [42] and is preferred by many authors and translations (Speiser 1964.352; Brett 2000: 130; Westermann 1986[43]: 166; Von Rad 1961: 400; Biblia de Jerusalem 1976; The New English Bible 1972[44]). The reasons for this second reading are diverse and particularly connected to the socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions of the passage. Speiser, for example, considers that the reference to "serfs" or "slaves" makes more sense in the general idea of Genesis 47.13-26 (Speiser 1964: 352), connecting this reading with Joseph's actions and the fate of the Egyptians.

Another author, Mark Brett, contributes with a provocative input to the discussion of this translation. Brett, who bases his reading on the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch, thinks that the Hebrew standard version that says that Joseph "made them (the Egyptians) pass to the cities" does not correspond to the logic of the literary context at all (2000: 130). He proposes that this different version can be understood as an alteration made by the scribes on the older narrative with the intention to "protect Joseph from an unflattering portrait of his character" (Brett 2000: 130).[45] This argument is very important, since it shows how oppressive and unjust the character of Joseph is in Genesis 47.13-26, at the point that it would be necessary to defend him from such a portrait. In spite of this clarification, elementary for the textual criticism and useful to open a variety of readings of the text, I have opted to follow the Masoretic text in my translation, having the Greek version next to it as a valuable resource.

[38] Translated by Redford as "those who are in your households" (Redford 1970: 32).
[39] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1997: 79).
[40] The LXX Ralph's version translates 21 as "καὶ τὸν λαὸν κατεδουλώσατο αὐτῷ εἰς παῖδας ἀπ᾽ ἄκρων ὁρίων Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῶν ἄκρων", meaning "and he made them slaves from one boundary of Egypt to the other".
[41] See Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1997: 79).
[42] See Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (1997: 79).
[43] His translation is "He put them into servitude…"
[44] This version puts Pharaoh as the one who enslaves the Egyptians (New English Bible 1972: 40-41), which shows the interesting attempts to keep Joseph away of act.
[45] The same thing happens in the translation of the New English Bible, although the method used here is to translate the Hebrew "he" as "Pharaoh", even though the previous "he" has been in reference to Joseph.

The reason for this is that I believe that there is a close connection in meaning, even a synonymic function, of the phrases “caused them to pass to the cities” and “made them slaves”. As I described before in section 1.1.1 and mention later in the socio-economic description of the world behind the text, becoming serfs can have the same connotation in the biblical tradition as moving to live in the city.

In the reconstruction of the text of Genesis 47.13-26, Westermann makes an interesting argument saying that Genesis 47.13-26 is a narrative made by the combination of two stories. Westermann (1986: 175) says that the author of this narrative knew two traditions, one related to the famine and the need of bread (verse19a, 20-21) and the other related to seed and the tax of one-fifth (verse19b and 26). He considers that the phrase “you have saved our lives” in verse 25 corresponds to the giving of the seed (19b and 23; see Westermann 1986: 176). In addition, for Westermann (1986: 176) “may we find favour in the eyes of our Lord” expresses the gratitude of such a situation, adding to this that “we will be slaves” can be an addition or also resemble courtly language. With this construction, or deconstruction, Westermann seems to avoid the possibility and difficulty of seeing the words in verse 25 in direct relation to what happens in 20-22, which for him would be “so macabre and even so a reaction that it could not even be attributed to the most inept of authors” (Westermann 1986: 176). The arguments of this author present a convincing possibility, considering the process of construction of the biblical texts. However, there is also the possibility that verses 20-22 and 25 are closely connected and, in fact, that Genesis 47.25 represents a strong critique and ridicule of what happens in 20-22, specially noting, in the possible historical context of the narrative, all the efforts made to legitimize the monarchy, its salvific role and its socio-economic organization. These dimensions are discussed in the coming sections. At this point, what can be said is that the text of Genesis 47.13-26 has different possibilities in its translations, with the interesting element that they can influence, in one way or another, what the narrative says about socio-economic injustice.

2.2. Authorship, date and place of composition:

The world that is behind the text is very important in the search for the socio-economic and ideo-theological dynamics promoted and reflected in the composition of Genesis 47.13-26. However, scholars who work in the book of Genesis have not written much about these elements in this passage. They are usually more interested in describing the Joseph story, and so tend to speak about this little narrative in connection with its famous literary context.

This, for example, is what happens in terms of the authorship, date and place of the composition of Genesis 47.13-26, because many of the arguments provided on this aspect are in connection with what is said about the Joseph story. In terms of authorship, therefore, the Yahwist has

been given, almost unanimously, responsibility for the composition of this section. This is what Speiser (1964: 353) thinks, connecting Genesis 47.13-26 with the Joseph story through the motif of the famine. Coats (1976: 68 and 1983: 299) does something similar, mentioning that this section, together with verse 12, is the product of the so-called Yahwistic writer, who attached it to the conclusion of the Joseph story. If the hypothesis is assumed that the Yahwist is the writer of the narrative, then the task is to trace the date and place of work.

Authors like Gottwald (1987: 137, 334) and Mosala (1993: 66) maintain the argument that "J" probably composed under the rule of Solomon[46], around the second half of the 10th century B.C.E. Coote and Ord (1989: 5) agree with them, proposing that the Yahwist demonstrates the characteristics of a product of an urban great tradition, which makes it impossible for it to have been developed before the United Monarchy of David and Solomon[47]. Yahwistic writers would have been people in governmental favour and/or service (Gottwald 1985:137), maybe royal scribes under Solomonic rule (Mosala 1993: 66), with the purpose to "provide a national epic" for the kingdom of David and Solomon" (Gottwald 1985: 137). Such work would be a history of Israel reflecting the concerns of the state, legitimating the change in economic structure from an egalitarian tribal system to a tributary-exploitive monarchical system (Mosala 1993: 66). "J" is created as a necessity, thinks Coote, to validate the establishment of David's royal house and the social, economic and religious changes it provoked (Coote and Ord 1989: 6-7).

The modifications due to the imposition of the Davidic state were not small (Coote and Ord 1989: 6-7), so the Yahwistic document shows the interest in explaining them, especially the formation of large states in Israel, and the simultaneous dispossession of the peasants (Mosala 1993: 66). Coote (1990: 7 and 30) also adds that one of the purposes for the composition by the Yahwistic author (s) was to unite Israel and Judah against their common enemy, Egypt, and to legitimize the understanding that corvée, in the hands of David, was better than in the hands of the Egyptians. We could be talking, then, about several editions of the Yahwistic document[48], since it appears to be the enemy of David's reign (Coote 1990: 7), but friendly in Solomon's kingdom (Coote and Ord 1989: 29).

However, even though Gottwald (1987: 334) points out that "J" is part of an apology of the Davidic house, he adds that this account can also contain a warning to the Davidic dynasty for an excessive human and kingly pride, reminding the rulers of their subservience to divine purposes. There

[46] Mosala (1993:66) specifies that it could have been in the Davidic-Solomonic era of the Israelite monarchy.
[47] He also thinks that this composition could not have happened later than Solomon because it shows no awareness of the division of the Kingdoms (Coote and Ord 1989: 5-6). See also the argument that says that "J" is a work of the monarchy of David, not Solomon (Coote and Ord 1989: 29).
[48] See Coote (1990: 7, 41), where he talks about the edition of "J" done by the Elohist, where Solomon is compared with Pharaoh in order to discredit the rule of the southern house.

are two elements to highlight here. Gottwald's argument "opens the door" to criticizing the excesses of the kingship, allowing the thought that not every idea that comes from the court is positive for the king. Nevertheless, it is clear that the institution of the monarchy continues to be legitimized through the argument that it serves the divine realm, showing the close connection in Israel-Judah between the political and religious institutions. The first element, however, can invite the idea that the court or circles with the power to write could produce anti-kingship accounts, which is what can be found in Genesis 47.13-26. If we follow this idea, the place of the composition must have been Judah, as its author stresses its central role among the tribes in the Joseph story (Gottwald 1985: 137).

Even though this early date for "J" is commonly accepted, other authors have argued that "J" is a late work, placing it far away from the so-called United Monarchy. Feliz García López mentions the work of Schmidt and Van Seters as an example, arguing that authors like Schmidt abandoned the idea of "J" being in the Solomonic period and proposed its composition being around the exilic times (García 2003: 52). This argument belongs to the latest discussions around the Yahwist, which require a reconstruction of the whole hypothesis around the beginning of its composition in Davidic-Solomonic times.

However, taking the hypothesis of the Yahwistic as a document begun with the United Monarchy, is one way of understanding the socio-historic context of Genesis 47.13-26. The Yahwistic documents becomes an ideo-theological product with the idea of writing to benefit Davidic-Solomonic dynasty. Also, it is a legitimation of the socio-economic shifts implemented by these monarchs in their respective periods, which shows the difficult economic situations suffered by the population due to them. Thinking of the Yahwist as a pro-monarchic document, with all the characteristics mentioned, makes it difficult to claim that Genesis 47.13-26 has an agenda that criticizes the kings and his institutions, since its role should have been one of legitimating the crown. It could be possible that Genesis 47.13-26 reflects the context of the Davidic-Solomonic kingships and the economic shift they brought to Israel-Judah. The text would function as a memory that reminds and reflects on such a moment; But if the Yahwist's goal was to support and legitimize the monarchy, then the argument that sees a critique and ridicule in this account does not make much sense. However, the portrait of the taxation system and the actions of the rulers in Genesis 47.13-36 seems so negative, and the fate of the Egyptians and the people in general so disastrous, that it is difficult to think that this text was intended to support the monarchy and its socio-economic projects. More than a legitimation, the text seems to contest strongly the institutions established by the king by unveiling their unjust mechanisms and the poverty they caused the population, which opens the possibility of finding in it criticism and ridicule of the monarchic kingships and its policies and its legitimation.

The fact that the reconstruction of the Solomonic monarchy has been very contested by the archaeological work of authors like Finkelstein (arguments described in Chapter Three), and that "J" is understood as a pro-monarchic writing, makes it problematic for such a theological school to be behind the production of Genesis 47.13-26. This makes it necessary to explore other contexts that reflect what is narrated in the story.

The work of Donald Redford could contribute in the discussion in the search for the possible historic context reflected in Genesis 47.13-26. This author studies the parallels between the events told in the Joseph story and the Egyptian context, as a way to trace when what Genesis 37-50, and in this case 47.13-26, narrates could have occurred in Egypt. To date what he calls "Joseph's Agrarian Reforms" and specially to explain "how the entire land came to be the property of the king", he maintains that "from the First Dynasty to Ptolemaic times the king was, in theory, the sole owner of the land of Egypt." (Redford 1970: 236). His opinion, then, opens the possibility that the text, in terms of land ownership, can respond to a very wide range of contexts. However, using the element of the temple's taxation and the usage of money in the text, he mentions a more concrete context that could be reflected in the text. First of all, Redford (1970: 239) argues that it was in the Saite period when temples were not taxed. He states that "…the Saite kings made every effort to conciliate with the priesthood, and made lavish endowments to all of the gods…" (Redford 1970: 239). He continues by saying that, "Both Herodotus and Diodorus specifically state that the priests of Egypt were exempt from taxation; and from Ptolemaic times comes the evidence that the priesthood received a "salary from the state" (Redford 1970: 239).

Redford's work shows how the actions narrated in Genesis 47.13-26 resemble those of the Egyptians around the seventh and sixth century BCE, opening the possibility that the text could have been composed around such a period. In addition, Redford uses the reference to silver in Genesis 47.13-26 to support his argument of a later composition. He mentions that even though coins were issued by Lydians long before, the way the term occurs in the Joseph story shows "that the writer is thinking of coined money" (Redford 1970: 234). This is important for Redford since coined money in circulation in Egypt and Palestine "could not have been before the close of the sixth century" (Redford 1970: 234)[49]. Because of this, Redford (1970: 239) mentions that "…it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the biblical passage reflects the ideal situation which obtained under Saites and later…" He concludes by dealing with the context of Genesis 47.13-26, saying that, "One wonders whether the account of Joseph's agrarian reforms represents a dim reflection of the momentous reforms brought

[49] See however Watson's reference to the appearance of monetary transactions already in late eighth century Juda (Watson 2004: 138).

about by this king (Bocchoris, 717-711 BC) and his descendants, the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty" (Redford 1970: 239). Again, using elements of the narrative, Redford contributes a different possibility to date the story, which needs to be considered when the context of Genesis 47.13-26 is analysed.

The work of authors like Redford confirm the necessity to explore other possibilities to date Genesis 47.13-26[50]. Texts like I Samuel 8 and 1 Kings 12 could also contribute for this purpose. They have enough socio-economic and ideo-theological elements in common with Genesis 47.13-26, specially the apparent rejection of an unjust and exploitative organization, to believe that they are the product of a similar socio-economic oppression and interested in a critique of such a system. As a result, tracing the socio-historic context of the texts mentioned can provide accurate elements to date Genesis 47.13-26 in its ideological and theological interests. This possibility is explored in Chapter Three of the present work, discussing how the problems related to taxation, corvée and religious legitimation that impoverished the population and took away their lands were also real for other moments of Israel's history, as the books of Micah and Amos mention for the eighth century and even Nehemiah for later periods. I believe Genesis 47.13-26 is a projection of the past that reflects on Israel and Judah's experience with monarchy at different moments of history (Houston 2006: 137). However, it is important to understand also, that the connection to Solomon's time is because the story narrates a transition in the socio-economic model and the implementation of new measures, something that is traditionally attributed to the Solomonic monarchy. In spite of this, the traditional consensus needs to be put into question.

Besides the time period, the authorship also needs to be interrogated. I mentioned before how difficult it is to connect the authorship of the story with the court if this institution usually represents the interests of the king. However, it is also difficult to link the passage to impoverished groups, in the sense that, in the ancient world, rarely would the oppressed have had access to tools of power like writing. Walter Houston, in his work of 1 Samuel 8, gives an interesting perspective on tracing groups behind texts and their interests that seem to challenge the abuses of the rulers. Houston suggests that 1 Samuel is a text that comes from more empowered circles that oppress those poorer than them, but who fear that stronger circles, like the ones of the court and the king, limit their unjust actions against the rest of the population:

> But we should note that it (1 Samuel 8) is not a complaint about oppression of the poor as such. It is not the poor who possess the fields and vineyards and flocks and herds and slaves which the king might wish to appropriate, nor is it they who have the richest harvest for the tithe. The feeling that is expressed by these words is surely primarily that of the well-to-do in

[50] Derived from a different political context than that of the Joseph story (Coatts 1983: 300).

> the land who might be the targets of greed and acquisitiveness; Nabot is an example. Some such people might indeed be themselves guilty of acts of oppression, and at risk from the activity of the king in defending the poor, if there were any such activity (Houston 2006: 136-137).

The importance of Houston's remarks for a responsible reading of Genesis 47.13-26 and a more critical search of the ideological interests and circles behind it is stated clearly. He is very clever at highlighting that the poor are not the ones oppressed in 1 Samuel 8.11-18, at least not immediately, since the resources taken would come from people with a higher capacity for possession. He also mentions that the groups behind these ideological interests would not be looking for justice of the poor, but instead for an attack on the king as a way to have the freedom to exploit others. Even though I believe that Genesis 47.13-26 could be a text that denounces the abuses of the powerful, it is important to question where the story might come from and if its interests are not similar of those Houston finds in 1 Samuel 8. As well as the text of Samuel, in Genesis the Egyptians are totally dispossessed of land, cattle, and silver, resources that could make interpreters think more about the class of the victims of the story. The warning here is merely ideological, as Houston (2006: 137) says, but it is totally valid in our search for a Hermeneutic of Liberation that tries to discern, as far as possible, the ideo-theological interests behind the composition of the biblical texts. However, the question here is about authorship, and Houston contributes to problematize such aspects in Genesis 47.13-26 and to avoid affirming too quickly that the text has, as its primary purpose, a denunciation of the abuse of the rulers in defence of the marginalized and oppressed.

In summary, the issues around the authorship, date and place of composition of Genesis 47.13-26 need still to be discussed. As mentioned before, many authors believe that who is behind the production of this text is the Yahwist, writing in Judah at the time of David and Solomon's kingships. I agree with the argument that there is an important resemblance in Solomon's context and what the text describes, but the problem is to give to the Yahwist, understood as a pro-monarchic school, the authorship of what I believe is an account against the oppressive projects of the Israelite and Judahite kings. I therefore, prefer to explore other hypotheses. Redford contributes to question the context traditionally supported, and Houston offers an interesting perspective that prompt more thought about those who are behind the composition of the text. The question around this issue, as a result, is still open.

2.3 Socio-economic dynamics reflected in Genesis 47.13-26:

It is now opportune to describe the socio-economic dynamics that seem to be closely related to

the composition of Genesis 47.13-26. The previous section summarized the discussions about the authorship, time and place of composition of this story, elements that clearly contribute to reconstruct its socio-historic world. The text itself is full of socio-economic language. It deals with preoccupations around property using terms like “land”, “cattle”, and “silver”. It also refers to transactions and deals through verbs like “buy”, “sell”, and “give”, and narrates about events that imply to “offer” and “request”. In addition, it mentions aspects related to production (sow, seed), unequal economic relations (slavery, taxation, benefits for some people, dispossession of the many and enrichment of the few), economic structures (statutes of Joseph for taxation to Pharaoh, slavery, exception for the priests), and struggles for economic survival (finding of bread).

Since these are the main socio-economic elements reflected in the story, the goal in this section is to trace the historic moment(s) in Israel where they were established and became part of the people’s daily life. The situations in Genesis 47.13-26 resemble in many ways those in the period of time inaugurated by the monarchy, and specifically the time of Solomon. This section, therefore, aims to describe briefly such resemblances in order to situate the text in a specific context. The information of other socio-economic realities that can be connected to the passage, especially those reflected by 1 Samuel 8 and 1 Kings 12, are described in Chapter Three.

The Israelite monarchy emerged around the 10th century B.C.E[51]. It brought several socio-economic changes that impacted negatively and changed the living conditions of the population. One biblical text that may have recorded this transition is 1 Samuel 8.11-18, which, according to West (2011: 514), may be a perfect manifestation “of a shift in the political economy of Ancient Israel”. This narrative tells of how the king could use the resources of the population for his own and his court’s benefit, taking common people for his army (verse11), making them and their animals enter into the corvée system (verse12 and verse16), asking them for tithes (verse15) and taking away their best lands (verse14). The account demonstrates the dynamics of a centralized organization that functions around the king, according to the ways of the monarchies of the Ancient Near East (Horsley 2009: 52). Gottwald (1987: 323-324) points out that the establishment of the monarchy in Ancient Israel generated political centralization, social stratification and changes in land tenure, just as 1 Samuel 8 shows. This account that refers to tithing, the corvée system and land-taking, seems to be very close to Genesis 47.13-26 and the issues it narrates, signalling that the monarchy could be a context where the story originated.

[51] See, for example, Horsley (2009: 53), where he mentions how archeology has shown that Jerusalem became a significant city only around the eighth century B.C.E., which makes the description of Solomon’s monarchy in 1 Kings 4-10 unlikely for this time.

The Israelite monarchy needed some time to put into full operation a new socio-economic system. Saul had a very different organization from those of David and Solomon, having certain influence over some territories but never building a centralized state. He is represented only as a king with a small full-time army (Dreher 1997: 25). David continued with the socio-economic changes, trying to introduce the system of a tributary mode of production in a more established way[52] in order to increase his resources. At the beginning of his reign, he managed to sustain the army and the court, which he had initiated without this system, using the resources taken from war, conquests and tributes to foreign lands (Dreher 1997: 26). Therefore, it seems that he kept on good terms with the population, since he did not need to extract their resources for his kingdom. However, there is evidence that at a certain point David started to sustain the state using the resources of the population. Wittenberg (2007: 12) points out David's establishment of forced labour at the end of his kingship (1 Samuel 20: 24), while West (2011: 520) mentions David's attempt to build a temple as an institution required for the function of the tributary mode of production. Finally, Dreher (1997: 26) sees in the failed census (I Samuel 24: 1-9; Chronicles 21.1-6) an attempt to extract tribute from the population. It was Solomon who consolidated the system of extraction and oppression that seems to be reflected in Genesis 47.13-26.

According to Clevenot (1985: 17-20), the Israelite state changed economically, politically and ideologically with the emergence of the Solomonic monarchy. Gottwald (1987:321) describes how Solomon "launched an ambitious program of political economy calculated to increase the wealth of his kingdom." Solomon found resources in trade and commercial deals, but his most important income came from taking the agricultural surpluses of the peasants (Gottwald 1987: 321-322; Chaney 1986: 60). He promoted a geographic centralization around Jerusalem, it being easier for him to collect taxes and recruit people and animals for forced labour (Clevenot 1985: 17-20).

The resources that Solomon took from the population gave him the resources to sustain the lavish court he was creating (Clevenot 1985: 28), and the stationary army he built to strengthen the security of his state (West 2011: 516-517; Clevenot 1985: 28). The tributes and forced labour demanded were also needed for the large-scale public works he assumed (West 2011: 515-516). These measures implemented by the king, according to West (2011: 515), were some of the ones that "maturated the tributary mode of production" in Israel.

The court he sustained clearly represented high expenses. According to Gottwald (1987: 322), they consumed "sumptuous food", something that Coote and Coote (1990: 33) describe, saying that "each day Solomon, his men and his family ate thirty sacks of flour, sixty sacks of meal, thirty oxen, a hundred sheep, assorted antelope and fowl, and unspecified quantities of wine and oil". Dreher (1997:

[52] The general details of this system as it operated in the Ancient World are discussed in Chapter Three.

31) calculates in 3000-4500 people made up Solomon's court, this based on the provision described in 1 Kings 4.22-28. The court was composed by government officials, landlords and merchants, who gained influence and status among the people due to grants and monopolies given by the crown (Gottwald 1987: 323-324). They represented a non-productive class, taking their wealth from the mass of the productive population (Gottwald 1985: 323-324). Such a group was very useful for the king's intention of centralizing his power (Gottwald 1985: 322), and gained their resources by taking advantage of the impoverished people.

The stationary army created by Solomon (Clevenot 1985: 28; West 2011: 516-517) contributed not only to his socio-economic project but also to the exploitation of the population. The army had the initial purpose of defending the land from foreign attacks, as it happened with Saul (Dreher 1997: 25) and also is stipulated in David's service to the people (Dreher 1997: 26). However, in Solomon's time, a time of peace (Dreher 1997: 26-27), it seems that more than for security purposes, the role of the army was to execute a more effective collection of taxes (Gottwald 1985: 323) and to control more strongly any intention of the people to resist the changes that were being made in Israel (Gottwald 1985: 322). Security was related closely to the political and economic dimensions of the state. The army was now not to protect the people, but to extract their property in favour of the king (Gottwald 1985: 323). A strong army, as with the court, was very costly (Gottwald 1985: 322), so Solomon used the land and the produce of the peasants as payment for the service of the military institution (Coote 1990: 36-37). The army, therefore, represented a high cost for the people, who, having to pay for its service to the king with their own resources, in addition suffered from their oppression and violence[53].

Solomon also undertook large-scale public works (West 2011: 516) that represented another heavy burden for the population. These building projects, that among them were the temple and many fortifications, were necessary for the legitimation and application of the new socio-economic order. Solomon engaged in the fortification of cities (Dreher 1997: 28) and in the beautification of Jerusalem. This forced the population to enter into corvée (Gottwald 1985: 322). Together with this, he assumed rebuilding projects to construct military palaces, administration buildings, granaries (Coote and Coote 1990: 34) and storage places, and also worked on the walls of Jerusalem and a fleet of merchant ships (Dreher 1997: 28). The king used the resources of the people for these exorbitantly costly projects. He expropriated the city threshing floor to construct the temple-palace, which was the most important piece in his building and economic programme. This was at the cost of putting an end to the food production in the city (Coote and Coote 1990: 34, 36; Dreher 1997: 28). Therefore, he started to extract the food from the other parts of his realm in order to feed his city, with the people of Israel being the most

[53] See Horsley (2009: 9), where he states how the military forces where used for coercion against the peasantry.

affected[54].

As has been said, Solomon's resources for these building projects and the government's new work positions came from the exploitation of the population. He reorganized his kingdom, without respecting the traditional tribal borders of the land, with the purpose of extracting tribute and recruiting people for forced labour in an easier way (Clevenot 1985: 28; Gottwald 1985: 322; Currid 1997: 166). He assumed the right to use children in his state works, saying that he had, by contract, the possibility of taking such measures (Dreher 1997: 29). Such work was, of course, for free (Dreher 1997: 27), and affected the peasants in their own work to produce on their lands as well, which in itself would get them into trouble, since the tribute taken from the crops was to finance the king's enterprises (West 2011: 516-517; Gottwald 1985: 322; Coote and Coote 1990: 37). As mentioned, the tribute was taken from the agricultural surpluses of the peasants' production (Gottwald 1985: 322). Gottwald (1987: 322) points out that the state powers (represented by the bureaucracy and backed up by the standing armies) would go to the fields and villages to take the crops of the peasants. This tribute put at risk the survival of the people, since they needed to produce for the king, the new temple and its class, their own consumption, and the next crop, leaving them in a difficult situation when natural disasters or other problems affected their production (Horsley 2009: 7). The excessive cost of the projects was unsustainable by Solomon and made him fall into debt[55]. Therefore, another mechanism he applied to deal with that was deciding what was to be produced on peasant land (West 2011: 517), making the people lose the freedom to decide what to grow on their own land, as the tribute the king asked had to be a specific product.

While the peasants were slowly being impoverished, a class closely related to the state emerged, taking advantage of the socio-economic changes and assuming a position of privilege by engaging with the economic organization developed by the state (Wittenberg 2007: 17). They took advantage of the pressure made by the state on the peasants and developed a loan system that would help the people get resources when their crops were not sufficient to pay for the tribute of the king. The loan system and the class that owned it were the result of the socio-economic model implanted by Solomon. However, this alternative worked for the worse for the people, who were more impoverished and oppressed by this system and its new class. When the people were unable to pay the tribute, sooner or later they would have to ask for loans, a situation that made them fall into debt (See West 2011: 516, where this author, citing Dreher, mentions how "tribute induces debt"). Loans became another way to exploit the population and take resources from it; the people would have to pay high-

[54] See Dreher (1997: 32), where this author says how the twelve districts created by Solomon would provide monthly for the maintenance of the king and his court.
[55] See Dreher (1997: 29) and debts due to materials and skilled laborers for the temple.

rate interests for their loans, falling into slavery and losing their lands due to their incapacity to cover the amounts owed (West 2011: 519; Horsley 2009: 4-5). Most of the people could not help becoming debt-slaves and seeing their lands transferred to urban elites (West 2011: 519), just as happens in Genesis 47.13-26 with the Egyptians. Debt made possible the pauperization of the peasantry and the acquisition of the land by the elites (West 2011: 520), an element they later needed for their businesses.

Land started to fall into fewer and fewer hands, being transferred from peasant owners to urban elites (West 2011: 518-520). Members of these indebted families became paid labourers on their land, or worse, forced off the land and transformed into debt-slaves or landless labourers (Horsley 2009: 44). Now, peasants, as tenants in their ancient land, would be coerced through a tax-debt system by the king and these new elites, who would dictate what they would grow in order to fulfil their export demands. This would result in the people stopping the production for their own subsistence in order to meet the demands of the rulers (West 2011: 519; Coote and Coote 1990: 37). West (2011: 520) summarizes this process in his citation of Gottwald, saying that "monarchic Israel extracted surplus from the peasants in two ways: a state tax/rent, dominant method of extraction, and a credit/debit system, outside the administration…and needed for the hardships caused by the tax-rent". The people were systematically impoverished by those in power, who took their produce, their land, their labour, and their freedom for their own benefit, situations that echo with Genesis 47.13-26 and the fate of the Egyptians.

Israelites were not very happy with the socio-economic exploitation they were suffering under Solomon's and his officers' rule. Solomon's economic project contradicted the principles of the ancient Israelite tribal organization, which resisted the tributary system and taxing powers used by the city-state to control the villages and rural areas, and promoted an egalitarian project based on equal access to resources (Gottwald 1985: 285). In this system, extended families would consume what they produced, the land would belong continuously to them and selling it for speculation was prohibited (Gottwald 1985: 286-287; Horsley 2009: 29; Chaney 1986: 62). In addition, interest loans were forbidden and there was obligatory aid to Israelites in need (Gottwald 1985: 287; Clevenot 1985: 33; Horsley 2009: 41). Mosala (1993: 63-64), citing Gottwald, mentions how ancient Israel assumed Yahweh as their god because he represented a just and egalitarian society. The land was Yahweh's, who "leased it to Israelite families for their use" (Horsley 2009: 29). All these principles and beliefs were broken by the new ethic implemented in Solomon's economic project, a situation that strongly angered the population, especially in the north (Gottwald 1985: 322-323).

Without doubt, resistance started to appear. West (2011: 515) thinks that 1 Samuel 8 possibly

represented a moment of great contestation where alternative economic programmes were debated. Reimer (1996: 4-6) contributes to this debate, arguing that such a debate is also connected with the Joseph story (Genesis 37-50), where the economic element is linked to the discussion around the legitimacy of the monarchic institution, the one which was leading the programme in centralizing the power and changing the tribal system. Dreher (1997: 37) suggests a group of texts that could be dated around Solomon's time in order to resist his monarchy. He thinks that, besides 1 Samuel 8.11-17, the corpus in Exodus 1-14, attributed to the Yahwist, forms part of this contestation, where the slavery in Egypt described in Exodus 1:11 and 2:11 would be connected with Solomon's oppressive system (Dreher 1997: 37). In addition, this author sustains that Deuteronomy 17.14-17 has as its main preoccupation to limit the king's enterprises related to the army, international agreements and commercial exchanges, and the acquisition of much gold and silver (Dreher 1997: 37-38). Dreher (1997: 38) proposes that these texts correspond to Solomon's reign, and leaves 1 Kings 12 as a text narrating a situation after the death of Solomon, where the people took advantage of the moment of transition to separate from Jerusalem. The resistance to socio-economic injustice is present in the biblical tradition, and especially to that one begun by Solomon's monarchy.

When thinking about Genesis 47.13-26 and the role it plays in the critique of an unjust socio-economic system, some authors have recognized it as a text of resistance and denunciation. Horsley (2009: 13), talking about the political economies in the Ancient world, sees in this story what today would be called "systematic extortion", describing how imperial regimes impoverish the people to gain control of their lands and make them debt-slaves. Clevenot (1985: 24), on the other hand, suggests that Genesis 47.13-26 is actually a description of the economic policies that the Northern tribes faced at the beginning of the monarchy, a situation reflected in the account of 1 Samuel 8. Brett (2000: 130), who analyses this story from the reality of the Persian period, thinks that it represents a question about slavery and a caricature of a willing peasantry who would find salvation in such a system. Besides these arguments, other textual elements can support the idea that Genesis is closely related to a resistance of an exploitative economic project. Horsley points out how children would become slaves to pay their parents' debts (Horsley 2009: 7), something I mentioned earlier as an important issue that resulted in my inclusion of verse 24b in the final translation of Genesis 47.13-26. Coote and Ord (1989: 73) explains the role of the cities in the ancient world, housing the palace, the temple, and the military and bureaucratic buildings, and grain-storage facilities, all institutions related to the exploitative system that impoverished the people to the extreme. Egypt, the setting of the story, is characterized by using the corvée system in the construction of food storages (Coote and Ord 1989: 73). This happens also in monarchic Israel-Judah, a place that would have copied its socio-economic organization from this

empire (Currid 1997: 166-167). The Pharaoh, one of the main beneficiaries of the Egyptians' dispossession in Genesis 47.13-26, would resemble Solomon (Coote and Ord 1989: 41), the exploitative ruler who got his richness and splendour from the exploitation of his people.

The monarchy of Solomon represented a shift in the socio-economic organization of the people of Israel and Judah. It caused the masses to be impoverished to an extreme, forcing them to become part of the system of corvée labour, asking them for tribute and taxes, dictating what they would produce, and taking their lands away due to debts, making them tenants, daily labourers or debt-slaves. The people were extremely oppressed, and the measures made them end up with almost nothing for their survival. Resistance grew, so voices and movements remembered the egalitarian beginnings of the people, criticized the economic changes of the king, and finally separated from his reign. Genesis 47.13-26 resembles this conflictive reality, narrating the period when the change was done and the difficult economic conditions it brought to the population. It uses the Egyptians as characters that experience what the Israelites lived, and put the rulers as the ones in charge of causing the ruin of the people. The connections between this story and the situation in and after Solomon's monarchy are many, giving way to the thought of this moment as the socio-economic period that the story is reflecting. The socio-economic model reflected is the tributary mode of production, centred in the temple and other institutions, in order to extract as much as it can from the people. However, together with this reality, other voices can be perceived, those that resisted, denounced and promoted other models.

2.4. Ideo-theological constructions reflected in Genesis 47.13-26:

In order to perceive the messages given by Genesis 47.13-26, it is central to understand the ideological and theological discourses that may be behind the production of this narrative. As Clevenot (1985: 4) states, it is important to "envisage the texts that make up the Bible as ideological products", and this is the idea I follow in this task. "Ideological" can be understood as the "representations or ideas that the people make of the world in which they live" (Clevenot 1985: 16), while "theological" can be described as the images and different discourses constructed about and in the name of the divinity. I use the term "ideo-theological" since, in the ancient world as also happens in ours, ideological discourses are connected to religious conceptions and worldviews. Tracing this dimension is necessary to unveil and describe the political and religious intentions that are supported, rejected or in dispute within the story.

Some of these ideological and theological ideas regarding Genesis 47.13-26 were already mentioned earlier in the discussion about the socio-economic background of the story. There it was argued that such a text could, on one hand, represent monarchic writings in search of political

legitimation. As well, people have seen it as anti-propagandistic movements against an unjust government; also mentioned also that the participation of the religious apparatus could support the state or also embody religious ideas that criticize its system. The role of Joseph, the Pharaoh and the priests in the narrative, all members of the political and religious apparatus, is the base for tracing the ideological and theological interests behind the production of Genesis 47.13-26.

Religion and politics functioned as an integral system in the Ancient World (Horsley 2009: 10; Coote and Ord 1989: 39; Wittenberg 2007: 3). Kings were seen as "sons" of god[56], supported by chief priests that also played the role of political heads in charge of the state's economy, and the taxes and tithes they requested were presented as sacred obligations to be taken to the house of the gods (Horsley 2009: 3). The temples became important ideological institutions not only to legitimate the state (Coote and Ord 1989: 46), being its political centre, but also to store the tithes and offerings brought to the gods, contributing to the construction of a system where economics and politics were sacred (Horsley 2009: 3). Kings and priests welcomed the tithes and offerings of the gods since they were considered their representatives and mediators[57], using ceremonies and festivities to manipulate the people to serve them (gods and kings) obediently (Horsley 2009: 11; Wittenberg 2007: 8).

The rulers constructed a "legitimized" way to extract the resources of the population using religious and ideological elements, implementing their system as required by the gods in order to bring stability and prosperity to the land and those who inhabited it (Wittenberg 2007: 8). The villages, through taxes, tithes and offerings (Horsley 2009: 3) supported temples and the elites related to them. This system slowly impoverished the population. In addition, these temple buildings, together with the palaces, owned most of the arable land in the Ancient World, which was the basis for the economic activities in places like lower Mesopotamia (West 2011: 522). The functionaries of these sanctuaries also engaged in making loans to the needy peasants, to later foreclose on their lands due to debts (Horsley 2009: 5). Temples, and the religious system in general, were tools of kings and rulers to extract "legitimately" the resources of the people. Political leaders would encourage respect and obedience to the gods in a double-legitimating system that only benefitted those in power. De Vaux (1976: 124) thinks that the description in Genesis 47.20-26, the story analysed in this writing, is in fact very close to what happened in lands such as Egypt, where most of the country belonged to the king and the temples.

This ideological and theological system in the Ancient World, although being the official one,

[56] See Coote and Ord (1989: 46) and how he describes the way kings were projected in the sky by the gods.
[57] See De Vaux (1976: 140) on how in Egypt and neighboring countries like Ugarit the custom was that the king would get tithes of fields, vineyards and cattle.

included other alternatives, as there were laws created to protect the peasants from the disasters provoked by the heavy burden of taxes, tithes and loans. Ancient codes like Hammurabi protected the right of the people to inhabit their ancestral land, as other societies did, and in Mesopotamia, when a king took power, debts would be cancelled so slaves could get back to their properties (Horsley 2009: 6-7). Although this can be seen clearly as a move for legitimation (Horsley 2009: 6-7), if it had, in actuality, been implemented, there is no doubt that would have brought relief to most of the population. These promulgations would have had a real impact in the ideological and religious ambits, and although they could be seen as protective measures to help people keep alive in the unjust systems that were oppressing them, it needs to be considered that the origin of such defensive codes could probably have come from the court itself. However, they could also represent certain contestation against an exploitative order and therefore arise as groups struggling from within alternative ideological and theological beliefs.

These were some of the ideological and theological systems working in the Ancient World, and therefore in most of the Canaanite city-states, which the ancient Israelites must have rejected strongly due to the oppression they brought to the population (Gottwald 1985: 273 and 284). However, it seems that after a time of rural independence from the cities and their mechanisms, the monarchy inaugurated in Israel re-introduced such patterns.

It was Solomon who constructed the temple and gave his kingship political and theological legitimation. He was not the favourite to become David's heir (Wittenberg 2007: 5), but used religion to strengthen his position as Israel's king and also make the people accept, at least momentarily, his economic enterprises. As has been said, the religious space gave rulers tools to support their political power, especially through temples, buildings seen as the houses of gods (West 2011: 523). The temple in Jerusalem, functioning ideologically without a difference from those of Baal and other city deities, was dedicated to the dynastic succession of David's house (Coote 1990: 34). It was used to project into the sky the rule of the earthly monarch (Coote and Ord 1989: 38), and therefore, gave the king and his rule a sacred investiture. David had tried to make a similar move by using a temple to begin the economic changes and strengthen his control over the population (West 2011: 523), but found lots of resistance and therefore abandoned the idea of taking on the enterprise (West 2011: 520, 523; Wittenberg 2007: 4-5)[58]. However, David had already used religion to legitimate his kingship, bringing the covenant ark, the religious symbol of the North, to the city of Jerusalem, hoping that having the God of the people would also give him their obedience (Wittenberg 2007: 3), thus showing the effectiveness

[58] See Coote and Ord (1989: 38), who argues that David did not build a temple because of lacking a stronger political economy in the highlands.

of religion in political and ideological affairs.

Solomon used the house of the gods to keep the jurisdiction over David's subjects (Coote 1990: 35), legitimizing himself by fomenting nationalism around the temple, something that did not work very well outside Jerusalem, as demonstrated when he died (Coote and Ord 1989: 41). He copied the ideo-theological models of Egypt and Tyre, being himself linked to both of them politically and economically[59]. In Egypt the king was seen as divine, a son of the god and worthy of veneration (Wittenberg 2007: 6); in addition, the monarch was also identified with the universal order, therefore, any rebellion against the state was resistant to the order of creation, and also the god who created it (Wittenberg 2007: 6). This element gave sacral legitimation to the political order Solomon's kingship needed, due to a lack of support, and thus convincing the population that his earthly rule was desired by the heavens (Wittenberg 2007: 6). Egyptian temples also provided ideological legitimation for the economic policies of the ruling classes (West 2011: 521), since "the attitude between the state and the temple…was that of collaboration and mutual ideological assistance…legitimating their forms of economic extraction and production through religion and education" (West 2011: 523). This contributes to an understanding of how central the temple was in Solomon's project, creating a worldview to make the people believe the discourses coming from the court.

On the other hand, Solomon assumed the idea of the state-cult from Tyre, constructing a temple with Canaanite architecture that functioned as "the visual communicator of the divine component of and support for the political realm" (Wittenberg 2007: 7). In Canaanite mythology, the earthly king presided and guaranteed social order in the same way the heavenly king did with the assembly of the gods and the order of creation (Wittenberg 2007: 8). This imagery was very useful for Solomon in his search for legitimation, especially since any resistance to the king would be understood as resistance to the god he represented (Wittenberg 2007: 8). It is clear, then, how important the temple was in the ideo-theological construction of Solomon's monarchy, and therefore in his economic projects. By using the temple and its religious mechanism, he made sure of legitimizing his position as divine representative, and therefore to ask for tribute, tax, free labour, animals and other resources for the benefit of the Gods, which actually ended up in his treasure, since he was portrayed as the son of the divinity. Therefore, he sold out the idea to the Israelites that god was with him, having the temple and the real palace "standing side by side" (West 2011: 524), separated only by a wall, which gave the idea that "God and king belonged together and that the king had divinely-sanctioned power to carry out his imperial governance" (Wittenberg 2007: 9). Being the builder of the temple, he became the first patron

[59] See Wittenberg (2007: 6-7), where he describes how Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, establishing an allegiance with the state and following its political organization. In addition, he had commercial links with Hiram, king of Tyre, who also guided him in his socio-economic reorganization.

of the god, using the resources of the already manipulated people (Wittenberg 2007: 8).

By using the temple, the king found the ideology necessary not only to legitimize his kingdom, but also to implement the socio-economic changes that brought poverty and oppression to the population, "who contributed with labour and resources to the temple being convinced that their service was divinely ordained" (West 2001: 523-524). He was supported by the priestly class he established and controlled (West 2011: 524), who also welcomed the advantages of their position. First of all, Solomon sent away the religious representatives who were connected to the old social organization, and who, in a certain way resisted his policies and the implications of the construction of the temple (Wittenberg 2007: 5). Besides this, it seems that he chose priests related to the Canaanite city-state religion, such as Zadok, who would provide him with the theology that his state-cult required (Wittenberg 2007: 5). Solomon provided the temple with the animals needed to hold lavish sacrifices (Gottwald 1985: 322), and probably followed the model of Egyptian temples, where "priests and temple workers were not only exempted from many obligations…but also received a share of the daily offerings and controlled the land of the temple" (West 2011: 521). He also supported the priests with lands taken from the villagers in the highland (Coote 1990: 36-37), and for their provision he separated the meat to use in the sacrifices, taken also from the people, with sheep and goats being the favourite choice of Solomon for the cult (Coote 1990: 36). Priests also benefitted by the socio-economic chaos caused by Solomon's tax and corvée labour, engaging in the loan-system and gaining more resources through foreclosures due to debts (Coote 1990: 36). These favours to the priestly classes were reciprocal, and therefore the religion served to affirm the political realm, creating an ideology strongly supported and understood only through the religious apparatus. Ideology and theology, therefore, were instruments used by Solomon to make the people interiorize the legitimacy of his kingship and all the religious and socio-economic changes it promoted.

In regards to Genesis 47.13-26, Watson (1994: 74) mentions how religion becomes the "concealment of oppression", creating an exploitive rhetoric that made the people believe that impoverishment and dispossession were the natural signs of salvation. Therefore, this author's opinion is that, from this narrative, people are persuaded to thank the "benevolence" of their rulers, who have saved them, although with some cost to their freedom (Watson 1994: 72). Considered from this aspect, rhetoric becomes a powerful weapon for the rulers, who are able to "identify rhetoric with reality" by making the people accept the legitimacy of their government above the reality of the oppression and extraction that they experience (Watson 1994: 74). It is impossible for the people, then, to differentiate between oppressors and oppressed, since the latter internalizes the presentation of the oppressor as that who "saves" (Watson 1994: 74). It could be argued that modern interpreters of the story have

"internalized" the dynamics of injustice Watson finds in the story.

Westermann (1986: 177) finds in the narrative an author showing his awareness for the land ownership measures in Egypt and the "legitimation of people's taxation". In addition, he rejects the possibility that the story is connected to an apology for the monarchy and its centralized power (Westermann 1986: 177). Speiser (1964: 353) and Redford (1970: 2) highlight Joseph's methods to deal with the famine (Speiser 1964: 353; Redford 1970: 2), and Von Rad (1961: 410) thinks that the narrative praises Joseph's wisdom and shows the gratitude of the people for his actions (Von Rad 1961: 410). These few examples show how powerful the ideo-theological elements of the narrative are, this being difficult to detect by many readers who end up "buying" the discourse of the story. Nevertheless, Watson is clear in his perception of the ideo-theological agenda of the narrative and criticizes the positions of some literary critics, who see it as "error of literary taste" to find in the text an oppressive argument (Watson 1994: 72).

It is true that Watson's description is very close to the possible agenda of the monarchy, although as I have been saying, in Genesis 47.13-26, there is more to a text that supports such rhetoric of oppression. I believe that the theological and ideological interests are strongly criticizing and ridiculing that construction by demonstrating the chaos produced by such a system. However, when reading the Joseph story as a whole, I think that the rhetoric of oppression mentioned by Watson in his analysis of Genesis 47.13-26 becomes true. In the Joseph story, the tributary mode of production is presented as "salvation" to the people (Reimer 1996: 6), making the population see as legitimate the power of the rulers and to understand the exploitation they live with as a "blessing and gracious act" of those who govern. I develop, in depth, the possible ideo-theological position of the Joseph story as a whole, and its connections and discussions with Genesis 47.13-26, but it is clear how both texts are heavily loaded with disputes about the legitimacy and rejection of theological, ideological and economic projects.

Although it seems to be an ideo-theological support to the monarchy and its economic system, there is also evidence of a religious and political resistance of such a programme in Genesis 47.13-26. This element not only adds to the ideo-theological discussions that are ongoing behind the text and therefore reflected on the literary level, but also contributes to unveil forgotten voices that might have a strong influence of the creation of Genesis 47.13-26.

As explained in the previous section, the state apparatus wanted to impose a political, theological and economic project that contradicted the traditional ways of Ancient Israel. Yahweh, the God of the tribal confederation, was the God of a different political economy, becoming the socio-

religious ideology to expel the tributary mode of production and resist the city-state organization based on tribute-tax structures, by implementing a system dominated by free peasant agriculture of equal relations and access to land (Gottwald 1985: 273). Therefore, this traditional origin represents an ideo-theological movement, interested in changing the socio-economic organization of Canaanite monarchies by using a different religious system from that of the city-state, privileging egalitarian instead of hierarchic and exploitive relations. Rejecting the power of the kings and rulers, who legitimized themselves as owners of the land (De Vaux 1976: 124), they constructed Yahweh as the ultimate owner of the land (Chaney 1986: 61; Horsley 2009: 38), who granted it to the people and therefore gave it a sacred dimension. In a political-theological construction, land could not be sold in perpetuity (Horsley 2009: 39), since this would break the religious and political principles of the people.

In addition, supporting those fallen into economic disgrace was mandatory, including lending money without interest in order to avoid any exploitation of neighbours (Horsley 2009: 41; Gottwald 1985: 287), offering support to special individuals such as widows and orphans, and also placing a limit on servitude (Gottwald 1985: 287). All these socio-political laws were sacred, attributed to the will of the God, in total contrast to the other constructions that positioned the divinity next to the ruler and motivated the people to surrender their work and resources to the unjust system. This represented, therefore, a totally different project, giving space to the discomfort of the people. When the monarchy finally found its way to Israel, voices contested such an institution, especially from the northern side, which was more attached to the ancestral beliefs of the people and resisted any attempt at centralization (Clevenot 1985: 29). The contestation to a centralized power took form in the rejection of the religious privilege of the temple in Jerusalem, the ideological, theological and economic centre of the Solomonic monarchy and his descendants (West 2011: 524). In addition, such contestation manifests in the appearance of other sanctuaries in Judah, as an example of the resistance to the tributary mode of production and its religious legitimation (West 2011: 524).

Genesis 47.13-26 could also have an origin in ideological and theological movements connected to these groups. According to authors like Coote and Ord (1989: 41), the construction of the Pharaoh in the narrative is a literary strategy that connects him with Solomon, both rulers related to exploitative systems and centralized power[60]. While Solomon would resemble the Pharaoh, Joseph would be created to make reference to Jeroboam, in an ideological construction to legitimize the rebellion against the house of David (Coote and Ord 1989: 41). This last idea portrays Joseph in a positive way, trying to say that Jeroboam has Egyptian court experience and is linked to Moses (Coote

[60] However, it is important that this is a comparison made by the Elohist when it rewrites "J". This shows the perspective of the Northern tribes and the construction of the apology for the rebellion against the Davidic house.

1990: 41). However, this construction would correspond more to the Joseph story than to Genesis 47.13-26, but it is important to mention because it shows the ideological and theological interests behind the composition of narratives very close to the one analysed in this work and demonstrates that there were voices and strong movements resisting Solomon's projects. Coote and Ord (1989: 28-29) thinks that "J" was, in the beginning, an account that resisted and rejected corvée, an edition that legitimated and accepted it in the time of Solomon (Coote and Ord 1989: 41 and 50). This would add interesting elements to the ideological and theological dimensions of "J", a document that would then contain two distinct and contradictory interests in its writings.

Authors like Currid (1997: 166-167) support the idea that Solomon based his economic measures on the organization of Egypt, the story of the origin of taxation and corvée in Egypt being another way to connect the context and its ruler with Israel. Watson considers that Genesis 47.13-26 is an oppressive narrative (Watson 1994: 72). He sustains this view in this story that Yahweh is "not" the God of Joseph (Watson 1994: 72), making reference to the absence of the God in the economic measures implemented by Joseph in this section. Watson (1994: 72) and also to the fact that in the Old Testament tradition Yahweh is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not of the patriarch Joseph. In addition, Brett (2000: 130) claims that Genesis 47.25 can be considered a caricature, inviting the people to think critically about peasants satisfied and happy with slavery. Genesis 47.13-26, due to its literary content that shows the exploitation of the rulers and the contested context where it could have originated, could perfectly embody the ideo-theological resistance against Solomon's political and religious project. In this text, the ancient Yahweh of the alternative socio-economic project is remembered. Together with this change of system and the poverty it brought to the population would be highlighted to encourage rejection of the state's ideology and religion and go back to the egalitarian organization of the past, as happened at the end of Solomon's kingship with the Northern tribes (1 Kings 12).

If the ideo-theological elements of Genesis 47.13-26 are going to be identified with the context around Solomon's monarchy, if it is true that there were different options struggling for legitimation. The court represented the centralization of power, the god-monarch and the economic exploitation, which followed the city-state model of Canaan and Egypt, long ago rejected by the ancient Israelites. On the other hand, there were circles with the power to write, which seemed to reject a monarchy that extracted all their resources and changed their more sacred laws. I consider that the negative portrait of the rulers and their economic system, in the literary dimension of the story, evokes the several voices that contested the monarchic institution and its legitimating mechanisms during and after the time of Solomon. It seems that the text can reflect more than one socio-historic context. On these grounds,

Genesis 47.13-26 may be a document showing the resistance to Solomon's projects and their like, ridiculing their ideological and religious discourses by showing how they worked in favour of the king and to the detriment of the people's quality of life. Nevertheless, the rhetorical analysis that follows would contribute to strengthen the position I have assumed.

3. Rhetorical analysis of Genesis 47.13-26

Rhetoric is a text's art of convincing, and rhetorical analysis is the work that identifies the strategies used by an author to persuade the audience in order to assume his/her point of view (de Wit 2010: 362). The purpose of this section, therefore, is to apply the rhetorical analysis to Genesis 47.13-26 in order to perceive two things: the rhetorical interest of the text, that is, what it wants to convince its audience about, and also the path and instruments it uses to do so. I use the elements that the literary and socio-historical analysis of the text has offered me, since these two dimensions play an important role in discerning the rhetorical message.

The quest here, therefore, is for the agenda of the author and the textual elements that are intended to fulfil this agenda: to perceive the possible "intention" of the author of the narrative, the interests behind the text he produced, the main discourse he tries to transmit, and the tools he uses to do it. My central presupposition for this is that biblical texts are not innocent compositions, but writings that pursue a specific reaction in those who read them. As Storniollo (1996: 187) points out there are no innocent writings but instead intentioned texts that always expect a specific reaction from the reader. This is also a basic preconception in rhetorical analysis, where it is understood that biblical texts are intentioned compositions that follow a logic that is to be discovered (Meynet 1998: 169-170). The text being an "intentioned composition", in the rhetorical analysis I use literary and socio-historic elements to unveil its discourse.

Already mentioned in section one is how some authors think of Genesis 47.13-26 as a story that shows the inauguration of a taxation system, the amazement caused by Egypt's land allocation, and the praising salvific actions of Joseph in the time of famine (Speiser 1964; Von Rad 1961; Westermann 1986). They conclude that the story is a positive account about Egypt, being dated in the time of Solomon due to the good relations this king had with this neighbour. These authors see no particular ideological interest behind the story, and give it an informative rather than an ideological role. Others, like Watson and Brett, however, think that the story has a deeper ideo-theological intention, either that of convincing the people that the oppression of the monarchy is salvation (Watson 1994), or that of actually putting into question a monarchic salvation that reaches the point of slavery (Brett 2000). The first one becomes an apology of the court, while the second one shows certain discomfort

with the government's rule and measures.

However, after assessing these arguments, studying the literary dimension of the text and considering the possible socio-historic context that produced it, it is evident that there is another possible rhetorical interest of Genesis 47.13-26. I believe that this text can be seen as an account that resists the oppression of the Israelite monarchy and ridicules not only its economic measures but also the discourse of salvation it defends. The author sends this message by showing the disastrous consequences of tribute and corvée in the life of the population, monarchic projects that were possibly inaugurated in Solomon's time. The rhetorical analysis of this section explores this proposal.

Rhetorical analysis is based on literary details, using elements like structure, characterization, and repetitions to discover the possible agenda or point of view of the intended author of the story (Olson 2010: 23). Since these elements are discussed in the first section of this chapter, I mention them briefly when necessary, and move to reflect more deeply on aspects like plot, point of view, character relations and key words, which are also part of the rhetorical constructions of texts (Olson 2010: 23). Besides that, it is very useful to complement this literary study with the socio-historic information described in section two, since the combination of those dimensions can contribute to a stronger construction of the arguments that describe the possible interests behind the story. Therefore, in this section I use both approaches to define the possible rhetorical discourse in Genesis 47.13-26.

Together with the literary-historical analysis of the argument in the story, I make reference to aspects of the Joseph story and other texts of the Old Testament tradition, such as I Samuel 8 and I Kings 12. These texts are discussed in the subsequent chapter, but their mention is important here because of the role they play in the possible rhetorical discourse of Genesis 47.13-26. The argumentation focuses on responding to the question of whether Genesis 47.13-26 is interested in legitimizing or ridiculing an exploitative socio-economic system in Israel.

3.1 Rhetorical discourse in Genesis 47.13-26

The task of this section is to seek the main rhetorical discourses in Genesis 47.13-26. The previous sections of the chapter are important for this because they provide not only a careful analysis of the literary details of the story but also a socio-historic frame where these elements can be reflected on. The possible discourse found in the narrative depends on how it fits within these two ambits. At this point, the elements of plot, narration-dialogue, characters relations, and key terms are described and how they contribute to the construction of the rhetorical discourse of the narrative is discussed. In addition, I mention how they contribute to build a story that denounces and rejects an oppressive system and at the same time invite its audience to reflect on their God of liberation.

The plot plays an important role constructing the discourse in any narrative (Meynet 1998: 38; Olson 2010: 23). The plot is the series of events told in the narrative, the way the situations move to the outcome of the story (Walsh 2009: 13-19). In Genesis 47.13-26, the events narrate, with lots of detail, how the Egyptians' situation worsens due to Joseph's unjust actions in the midst of famine, with the Pharaoh and the priests as the only ones who benefit from this situation. The plot can be organized in three main events. In the first one, which represents the beginning of the story, the narrator describes the vulnerability and suffering of the people due to a severe famine and their slow process of impoverishment by the actions of the state, embodied in Joseph (verses 13-22). The second moment begins in the middle of these events that tell about the difficult situation of the people. In it the author shows, through two very similar questions, the uncertainty of the population who fear dying because of what is happening: Shall we die before your eyes? (verses 15 and 19). Joseph never responds to this question, but what comes is a series of events that seem to be the response to it. The narrator relates how the government takes action to ensure the "salvation" of the population (verses 14-24); this, ironically, ends up being the establishment of slavery and the system of taxation (verses 20-26). This corresponds to the third moment of the plot, which concludes the story by solving the problem.

These series of events clearly show the slow process of dispossession that the people suffer in Joseph's presence, losing silver, cattle, land, and freedom, to end up as slaves and tenants of the Pharaoh. The dispossession does not end there, as the last event shows Joseph establishing a perpetual mechanism of extraction through the taxation system. On one hand, therefore, the events show the unjust socio-economic system implemented by Joseph and the rulers of Egypt, and on the other, they demonstrate the harsh impact that such measures have on the population, impoverishing them into slavery. The narrator only limits himself to describing what happens, giving no apparent value judgement nor showing his position about what he narrates. He only tells of the events that seem to refer to very concrete situations. According to Meynet (1998: 173), Hebrew rhetoric is not worried about abstract ideas or giving examples, as Greek rhetoric does, but is about describing reality and showing concrete situations, leaving the audience to "read between the lines" and conclude the message intended. This seems very close to what the author of this story does. He is telling the story giving lots of details that seem to evoke a concrete reality but, at least directly, he does not seem to give any judgement value, although the description he provides can be understood as a very negative portrait of those in power, exploiting people in need and vulnerability.

In addition, by analysing the possible socio-historic context of Genesis 47.13-26, it can be said that the plot of this story actually resembles a known reality that of the people of Israel under the monarchic period, especially the initiated moment when Solomon took the throne and implemented

economic measures related to the tributary mode of production. At this time, due to burdens such as taxes and corvée labour, people started becoming dispossessed by the rulers, and when they were unable to fulfil those requirements, they fell into debt in order to pay the elites and feed their families. Unable to sustain such socio-economic pressure, they lost their possessions, their land and their freedom, ending up as tenants of the ruling classes or even as daily labourers. To be slaves of the kings and pay taxes was part of the change suffered by the Israelites when David and Solomon rose to power (Wittenberg 2007: 13-14), situations that made the population sell their ancestral lands, in order to survive. The land, the most precious possession in the Ancient World, passed from the peasants to the elites, as it happened when Joseph, due to the transactions with the people for bread, took all their land and gave it to Pharaoh. The narrative seems to portray such exchanges as legal transactions, based on the gracious attitude of Joseph who accepts the request of the people, who are a collective character portrayed in the story as the ones who ask to become slaves of Pharaoh.

The same happened with the ideo-theology of Solomon's state when It legitimized the dispossession of the peasantry by taking their work and animals as sacred services to the gods. The plot here shows only negative and oppressive actions of the rulers against the people, and ends up with the final act of oppression in the establishment of the taxation system, something that had oppressed the people of Israel and Judah since the establishment of the Jerusalemite monarchy. Read in the context of the Solomonic monarchy, the story can only remind an audience about the exploitative regime imposed by this king on the population, which ended up having nothing after living as independent owners. Read between the lines, which according to Meynet is one of the invitations of Hebrew rhetoric, there is the provocation to make connections between the text and the concrete situation. This is to identify the Pharaoh and Joseph with the king and the court and also the priests with the religious classes who legitimized the extraction. In addition, there is also the identification of the expression of salvation with the repeated ideology of the government's salvific role in the land; also the experience of the Egyptians identified with that of those impoverished by the taxes, dispossessed of their ancient lands, and enslaved through corvée. That is the probable conclusion that an Israelite, in the time of Solomon, or the years after that, might make when hearing Genesis 47.13-26.

Meynet (1998: 175) proposes that another characteristic of Hebrew rhetoric is juxtaposition, expressing the logical relations between ideas by repetitions and symmetrical units, avoiding words like "therefore", "as" or "so to make the connections in the narratives. I believe that the author of Genesis 47.13-26 organized the plot of the story in this way. In the narrative, he connects the events by repetitions of scenes (people coming to Joseph in verses 15 and 18; people losing something: 14, 17, 20, 21, 24), which are put into motion by every intervention of Joseph (taking the silver makes the

people give cattle, and therefore land, and therefore become slaves, and therefore pay taxes). The author connects the beginning of most of the verses with a "waw" (ו), that if translated as "and", can give the impression that an action comes after another without giving time for the audience to breath. The events are deeply connected to each other, sharing a socio-economic nature, where one that is the consequence of the previous is also the cause of the one that comes later. In the story, the conditions of vulnerability described at the beginning and the slow impoverishment of the people provoke the vital questions for life. The all too rapid and naive affirmation of salvation is based on the rescuing actions of the government, which "saves" by creating a system of economic extraction and dependence. The plot events seem juxtaposed with each other as the story develops. This shows the important function of the plot, which takes the reader through an interconnected series of events that are so negative that the outcome should not surprise anyone. The less surprised should be the people of Israel and Judah, who would have experienced a situation like the one narrated and would have known the dramatic consequences caused by actions like the ones taken by Joseph.

The events of the plot are closely related, and the one in charge of the outcome is Joseph. The author creates a very clever and subtle narrator to tell the story, never saying directly that the people end up as slaves, paying a perpetual tax because of Joseph's actions. However, I believe he uses juxtaposition to put all the responsibility on to Joseph's hands, and therefore on the king and his courtiers without stating this directly. The narrator does not say that: due to Joseph's actions the people are impoverished, enslaved and dominated by taxation and corvée system. However, the juxtaposition of the events suggests that Joseph is the one in charge of carrying out the actions that lead to the negative fate and therefore, is the one who has to be blamed for the situation of the Egyptians. His critique of Joseph is covert, intended by the way he describes the events of the plot, the actions taken by Joseph and the conditions suffered by the population.

Finally, the aspect related to the plot that needs to be taken into consideration is the element of concentric arrangement. According to Meynet (1998: 175), Hebrew rhetoric has the characteristic of most often being concentrically structured, having in the middle as the most important part of the argument, usually in the form of a question or conflict, with the other elements arranged in reference to it. In discussing the structure of Genesis 47.13-26, I proposed that the most important moment of the story was the one found in verses 18-22, where the people not only show with a question their vulnerable and desperate situation and the heartless and unjust response of Joseph, but also shown is their dispossession of the ancestral land and their enslavement. I believe that what the author of the story wants to show is, not only the severe situation of distress of the population due to the state's actions, but also the cruelty and cynicism of the state calling slavery and tax a salvation.

The answer to the vital question that represents the central moment of the story reveals itself not in verse 25, when the people thank Joseph for preserving their lives and being so gracious for making them Pharaoh's slaves, but in verse 26, with the establishment of the tenancy and taxation system. This ending responds to the central question in verse 19, which has a parallel in verse 15. Verse 26 responds with a strong: "Yes, people shall die, as Israelites did in front of the court and the king!" through the socio-economic model established by Joseph, which evokes that of the Solomonic monarchy. The question, therefore, has the important function of showing the desperate situation of the population, demonstrating the harsh socio-economic reality provoked by the actions of those in power, unveiling the real effects of the way the state saves, and reminding the people of how all this brakes the sacred ancestral laws of the Israel. The plot, therefore, is one of the instruments used by the author to show the injustice of the state, which embodied by Joseph, took advantage of the population to the point of making them slaves and creating a perpetual extractive system.

The plot analysis, therefore, seems to show that Genesis 47.13-26 is carefully arranged to denounce the injustice of the socio-economic organization brought by the temple-state institution in monarchic Israel. The text contrasts the fate of the Egyptians with their claims of being saved by the state, understanding the Egyptians as an image that identifies with the people of Israel and their situation, and Joseph as one representative of the monarchic system. This story, with the conclusion of a perpetual tax system and the dispossession of the population, challenges the legitimation of the socio-economic organization of the rising monarchy and ridicules its pretensions of being the only way God can use to bring salvation to the people. Genesis 47.13-26, therefore, critiques the ideological and theological legitimation of this system and shows the reality of oppression and exploitation that it produced. States and empires in the ancient Near East used this dominant economic structure, which found its way to Israel at the beginning of the monarchy. It represents the beginning of decadence of the quality of life of the population. Therefore, in this unjust system can be found the real answer to the central question about the proximity of death raised in the second moment of the plot structure.

The usage of narrative and dialogue/direct speech is another way that contributes to the rhetorical construction of texts. They both belong to what is called the "point of view"[61], which can be understood as the "apparent" position taken by the narrator of the story. By using narrative or dialogue/direct speech, the narrator shows his point of view and lets the audience know his opinion, both about the situations that occur and the people involved in them. In addition, they are useful for the author in order to mould the perception of the audience to what he wants them to think. The narrator can choose to make direct value judgements of the events that happen, prioritizing by narrating some

[61] See, for example, Walsh (2009: 43-48).

events more slowly with more details than others, also giving the opportunity to certain characters to speak directly while others we hear only through the narrator's voice. A narrator, for example, can express directly and with his own voice when a character or certain actions please or bother him, as it happens when he speaks about David's wrong in *Yahweh's* eyes in 2 Samuel 11.27 or when he refers positively to Josiah's religious reform and "fidelity" to the deity in 2 Kings 23.25. Besides, the narrator can characterize a certain person in one way or another, affecting the audience's perspective. For example, he can take more time to describe the nature of a person in a positive way, as happens with Abigail, or in a negative way, as occurs with Nabal (1 Samuel 25.3).

These two descriptions are important for the audience in order to judge the sequence of events that are about to come in that section. The author can also describe situations very quickly, which is a signal that what is said is not that transcendental for the story; or, on the other hand, describe them with lot of detail, therefore making his audience pay close attention to his words at that specific moment. This can be seen, for example, in 2 Samuel 13.8-9, where the narrator informs with detail the kind actions of Tamar for his brother Abnon, a description that has the rhetorical role of increasing the negative portrait of Abnon's subsequent deeds against her. These usages belong to the area of narrative where the narrator can intervene directly with his opinion or be more subtle, not telling, but showing the ways of a person or the impact of certain actions so the audience can draw its own conclusions. Giving direct speech to a character is, of course, another way to highlight the person that speaks and the importance of the moment narrated, both elements a part of the rhetorical construction. When Cain says that he does not know where his brother is, in Genesis 4.9, it is a way to put his negative action in evidence and to increase the negative portrayal of his character. Perceiving these constructions is important, not only because they can show the interest of the person who composed the work, but also because they have an impact on the audience who may assume the position that the narrator invites them to.

Some of these constructions described can be perceived in Genesis 47.13-26. In this section, for example, the narrator uses a lot of detail to show the way Joseph dispossesses the population and establishes the oppressive systems of taxation and corvée, giving his character a very negative role in the story and, therefore, a negative image before the audience. When Joseph takes the money and the cattle of the Egyptians (verses 14 and 17), the narrator is careful to mention that he has taken *all* of it, leaving nothing to the people. In addition, when Joseph takes the animals of the population, the narrator is not only happy to say that they were taken to Pharaoh's house or became Pharaoh's possession, but continues describing, one by one, the type of animals Joseph took from the people. Those who read and hear the story can even imagine, with detail, which animals are taken. The

description gives a sense of a slow exodus from the house of the people to the house of the king of Egypt. This detail is important, and by stopping here to tell about which animals pass from many hands to some, the author makes the audience pay attention and actually observe the magnitude of Joseph's negative actions, of Pharaoh's benefits and of the people's harm. As the author portrays him, every intervention of Joseph is to take something from the people. When he speaks, it is to ask something from the Egyptians, as it happens in verses 16 and 24, when he asks for cattle and also establishes the system of taxation. When he acts, it is also to dispossess and take away, as it occurs in verses 14, 17, 20, 21, 26, when he takes silver, cattle, land, independence and taxes. The author characterizes Joseph negatively through his actions, showing him, and the system he represents, as extremely unjust and exploitive. With Joseph, he is also criticizing the model he embodies, that is, probably the monarchic state and its socio/economic program based on tax and corvée.

The Egyptians are also part of these narrative dynamics. The author gives them direct speech on three central occasions. The first one is when Joseph is questioned about the difficult situation they are experiencing and the poor and oppressive response of the state. They ask, in verses 15 and 19, if Joseph, the man who governs all the land and also has taken the resources of the population, will leave them to die of starvation *before his eyes*, in other words, with his consent and responsibility. This is not only a way to show the difficult socio-economic reality of the Egyptians, the archetype of the Israelites, but also a very concrete picture of the rulers of the monarchic time, which would be immutable to the deteriorated situation of the population. The second intervention of the people happens in verse 18-20, when they offer themselves as Pharaoh's slaves and their lands as his possession. This direct speech that they are given, in my opinion, has the same rhetorical role as the final intervention of the people in verse 25, where they thank Joseph for letting them become Pharaoh's tenants and grant them the opportunity to pay him the fifth of their produce. On a first occasion, someone may well think that the Egyptians are actually happy with the type of salvation Joseph has brought to their lives.

However, when the socio-historic and ideo-theological context of the story is discussed, I mention that Joseph's actions probably served as a reminder to those who lived at the beginning of the United Monarchy at a time when such institutions needed strong legitimation due to the rejection they found among several sections of the population. This makes it clear that the request for slavery and the thanks for tenancy and taxation do not really to fit the reality of the people's perceptions in the context of Solomon or at any other time of Israel's history. These words make more sense if they come from the legitimizing projects of the monarchy, which was interested in making the people assume a perspective where the crown and its officers were sacredly-installed saviours, while in reality they were exploiting the population and extracting their resources. The voice of the Egyptians here echoes the discourse of

the rulers, what they wanted the people of Israel to believe and interiorize. However, it seems that most of the people never assumed this discourse, as the revolt against the Davidic house after Solomon's death suggests. Putting these words in the mouth of the Egyptians and showing the dispossession and oppressive system they had fallen in to, instead, would make the audience of the story react with anger and indignation at first. Then later, the situation may likely provoke laughter, since it would be unthinkable for the victims of exploitation, like the Egyptians, to consider Joseph's actions graciously or as worthy of thanks. The Egyptians' direct speech speak is another of the author's strategies to denounce the falsehood of the state's ideo-theology, to ridicule its so-called salvific program, and call the audience to distance themselves from the attitude of the Egyptians and to struggle for a different reality. As seen with the portrayal of Joseph and the Egyptians, narrative and dialogue/direct speech is a rhetorical instrument that could have been used by the author to construct the discourse he wanted to transmit to his audience, in this case to denounce and ridicule, an unjust socio-economic system.

The third element I want to reflect on in terms on the rhetorical construction of Genesis 47.13-26 is one of the characters' relationships. As I have already described the role of the characters in this chapter, this discussion is limited to how they relate to each other as a rhetorical device to denounce socio-economic exploitation. The story has two main groups of characters that interact with each other in an unequal, abusive and oppressive way. At a certain point at the beginning of the story, it can be said that both groups have power. On the one side, Joseph, the priests and the Pharaoh represent the hierarchic "leadership" of the land, controlling by force and manipulation the governmental and religious power. On the other, we find the Egyptians, the collective that owns the land and work force. The Egyptians are a free and independent collective, producing for themselves, having at a certain point control of their destiny by being a political force. However, the story tells how these relations of power start to change, at the point that the entire population ends up under the dominion of the small governing elite, losing their lands and becoming tenants of Pharaoh, condemned to give him the fifth of their produce perpetually.

The relationships described in the story, therefore, are a picture of the social relations in the socio-historical context during the monarchy. Joseph, the Pharaoh and the priests are the powerful group who slowly dispose of and oppress the Egyptians. The court, the king and the temple apparatus, institutions originated with the beginning of the monarchy, are echoed here, being the "legal" instruments used by the rulers to slowly extract the resources of the population. In the story, the people are subjected to Joseph due to debt. This situation represents a transition in the power relations, given that in their first encounter they talk to Joseph without giving him any title (verse 15), while in the second one (verse 18), just before they become slaves, they call Joseph "ynl+doa]" (our lord,),

showing the submissive reality they have fallen into. The Egyptians are Joseph´s servants due to debt, Pharaoh´s slaves due to tax, and the priests' maintainers due to tithing that, even though it is not mentioned in the story, will become a known religious obligation of the people when they live under a temple-state regime. The relations between the two groups are of unequal power and therefore of exploitation, with three sections of the society representing a very small number of the population which is taking the means of life of the majority. Those in the powerful group have their own dynamics of relationship, which is of mutual legitimation and protection. Joseph has been put in control of Egypt by Pharaoh and has married a priest's daughter. In exchange, the story shows, he has dispossessed the people to give the resources to the Pharaoh and has also avoided to taking anything from the priests, who have the protection of the king of Egypt. Here, there is an ideo-theological mechanism at work, where the political and ideological realm control the priesthood, and the priesthood as the religious authority (at least in theory), supports the state and legitimizes it through religion. These powerful groups, court, monarchy and priesthood, are guilty of extracting from the people. The author makes sure that the relationships projected in the story reflect the exploitative reality lived by the Israelites in the times of the monarchy. The relationships of the story change while it develops, describing the injustices lived by the people in the times of Solomon and other oppressive kings in Israel and Judah, who with other power groups connected to the priesthood and landlords, become the fount for the impoverishment of the population.

The last aspect in the rhetorical analysis of Genesis 47.13-26 is the use of key words in the text. These central words or phrases suggest and contain the main messages of the story. In regards to Genesis 47.13-26, three sets of key words are considered central for the socio-economic and ideo-theological dimension of the text. The first word is the verb "twm" (to die), repeated twice in the questions showing the vulnerability and suffering of the population in verses 15 and 19. The fear of dying is what the people express in the midst of their desperate situation. The narrator makes sure to use it twice, emphasizing the experience of the people, which resembles that of the majority of Israelites. Death is the danger that the people risk in the institution of the monarchy and their system of extraction. The Egyptians experienced it in chapter 41, when Joseph convinced Pharaoh of taxing the people, although it did not have the implications that it has in 47.13-26, where the people are totally impoverished and dispossessed and therefore without the resources to avoid death. In verses 15 and 19, the Egyptians can imagine what is about to come, since they have no food and their resources are being extracted, and it is confirmed when Joseph "saves" them through slavery and taxation, "legalized" and "institutionalized" systems that create death. The fear of death is the cry of the exploited and inconsolable people who, in their intervention claim mercy from Joseph and the state, but in a rhetorical

sense also denounce their hardness and harsh treatment of the population. The cry in the story is the need of bread and the fear of death due to starvation. This is connected with the following key words in the narrative that express how the people became "slaves of Pharaoh" (verse 21) and also how Joseph establishes that the people have to give a "fifth to Pharaoh" (verse 24). These two interventions are also important words for the rhetorical construction of the passage, since they contribute to highlighting the injustice of the socio-economic system of Joseph and the rulers and the negative fate of the Egyptians.

The first word, in verse 21, can be translated as "enslaved or made servants" (katadoulo,w). This new term is the one that needs to be used when the Egyptians are referred to. They are Pharaoh's slaves, and have now submitted to and are dependent on him. This word helps the audience see what the impact of Joseph's measures has been, which have made the people lose their freedom, their dignity, their humanity, their divine nature as free and independent beings. That is the consequence of the model applied by Joseph, and the author is very careful here to show it to the audience, who would surely identify with this situation or would fear falling into it. Living under Solomon's kingdom, if that is one of the contexts that the story reflects, represented slavery, as the book of Kings shows, with people having to live one month out every three months away from home to work in the kings projects (1 Kings 5.13-14). At this point, people under Solomon would still have been free, but for a short time, because not being able to work their lands to produce, and the heavy burden of taxes, tithes and debts would make them become debt-slaves eventually. The tradition of Exodus 1-14 is important here. Some authors believe that it is a de-legitimizing story of Solomon's monarchy, emphasizing the slavery lived by the Israelites at the time of this king's reign. Slaves they were in Egypt, and slaves the Egyptians are in Genesis 47.13-26, and the socio-historic and literary dimensions of both accounts allow a connection to be made here. Israelites would not be able just to ignore the detail of the Egyptians' fate, because it is theirs as well. The author repeats the reference of the enslaved Egyptians in verse 25, making sure that the audience does not forget the cost of the socio-economic impact of the monarchic project.

The phrase "give fifth to Pharaoh" in verse 24 has the same impact as the word just mentioned. The danger of death becomes real when there is a system of extraction that takes away from all of the population. The Israelites new this, as it became with Solomon, but did not stop there, as is shown by the prophets such as Micah and Amos in the eighth century and Nehemiah 5.1-5 in the second temple period. Giving the fifth to Pharaoh means the end of the liberating project initiated by the ancient Israelites, of the egalitarian society they formed, based on a justice of Yahweh, resisting the oppressive systems of the city-states that surrounded them. This phrase has a moral impact. What was constructed and defended with much effort, starts being broken by Joseph as it was in the real world by the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy. However, the story portrays the system in such a negative way that

its effect, instead of manipulating the people and making them more submissive and conformist, provoked in them indignation and resistance and the desire for liberation, the wish to go back to the ancient golden times of their people. “Give the fifth” to the rulers is a violation of the Israelite sacred law and an attempt to break what their God constructed, making the action unjustifiable. This explains the strong legitimizing project that tried to make the people interiorize the new system that went against their sacred principles. Slavery and taxation, then, can clearly be seen as a reason for the crying of the people in their fear of death. The mention here of the origin of the taxation system is a step back in Israel’s society, it represents going back to the reality of exploitation and oppression, the reality that produces death that they already resisted and escaped from. Both, slavery and taxation, remind the people of the reasons responsible for their difficult living conditions, while at the same time shows them how they are contrary to the will of their God.

The final key phrases that are important for the denunciation and ridiculing of an unjust system are both in verse 25. This verse is the best representative of the state’s ideo-theology. The author cleverly puts in the mouth of the Egyptians two phrases than have been more that shocking for several authors (Westermann 1986, Brett 2000). In it, we find the Egyptians thanking Joseph for “preserving their lives”, and just after these words, saying that they have found “grace in his eyes to become Pharaoh’s slaves”. These two references are deeply ideo-theological and as I have said, closer to the state than to any reality of the people. The monarchy had a legitimizing project that justified their power in a period of peace. A king was needed in times of war to defend the population, so in times of peace there was no excuse for a king or an army (Wittenberg 2007: 2-5); a way to do it was to make the people believe that the monarchy was the salvific channel given to them by God. If anything is true, it is that the monarchy brought everything but salvation to the population, and made them live in extremely bad conditions, as described earlier in the text. In addition, the people found everything but grace in the eyes of the rulers; they were enslaved, oppressed, exploited and killed. They were cursed by falling into the hands of the rulers, and those who read the story of Genesis 47.13-26 knew that. Salvation and grace at this point, therefore, becomes a denunciation of the ideo-theological discourse of the monarchy, which sold the idea of being salvific while in reality brought death to the people, as slavery and taxation.

Both phrases, in the mouths of the enslaved and totally dispossessed Egyptians, could be considered by the audience as a mocking insult to the population, who would never express such thankful words to an unjust and exploitative system. Instead, they would be likely to contribute to the denunciation of the lies of the rulers, who “preached” one thing but “did” another, and would seek to unmask the intentions behind the discourse of salvation promoted by the monarchy in an attempt to

dominate the minds of the people in order to control and possess their bodies. The denunciation of the discursive agenda of the powerful would be a tool of liberation and emancipation, of understanding the reality of the monarchy's impact, and therefore a destruction of the ruler's control programme. The key words, therefore, can be considered as rhetorical tools used by the author to denounce both the socio-economic injustice and the desired ideo-theological control of the rulers. However, it would not be happy to end in denunciation, but by showing the difficult situation of the people and how their liberating images were stolen and used for their oppression, they might be provoked to resist and struggle for a different reality.

The notions described here evoke ideas of irony, which can be useful to understand the argument I am trying to build. According to authors like Osborne (2011: 4), irony is a difficult aspect to work with because "the interpreter is working to demonstrate that what is most important is what the author *did not actually* say". Osborne's quotation clearly exposes how difficult it is to work with this type of notion when reading an ancient text. His definition of irony, however, seems very useful for the discussion around Genesis 47.13-26. Osborne, following Carolyn Sharp's work *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible,* mentions that:

> Irony is a performance of misdirection that generates aporetic interactions between unreliable "said" and a truer "unsaid" so as to persuade us of something that is subtler, more complex, or more profound than the apparent meaning. Irony disrupts cultural assumptions about the narrative coherence that seems to ground tropological and epistemological transactions, inviting us into an experience of alterity that moves us toward new insight by problematizing false understandings (Osborne 2011: 4-5).

Some notions of this quotation are important for this work. The "aporetic interactions", in other words, doubtful or unclear dynamics, could resemble the point of view of the text, which seems to be not very clear in the story. In addition, the element of the "unreliable said and truer unsaid" comes to mind when thinking of verse 25. In it the Egyptians say that Joseph has preserved their life, although he has dispossessed and enslaved them and also inaugurated a tax system. I have argued that the importance in these words is what is not said, and that the Egyptians' intervations have a contrary function: to denounce Joseph for this injustice and to challenge any argument that considers slavery and taxation as ways of salvation. Following Sharp's work, it could be argued that verse 25 contains some elements of the type of irony that works around "the unreliable said and truer unsaid". In addition, Sharp's notions of irony include a disruption of the narrative's coherence, and this disruption seems to come in verse 25, where all the dispossession and enslavement is interpreted as "grace". The little quotation recovered by Osborne offers interesting insights to understand Genesis 47.13-26 as story with ironic

elements. For Osborne (2011: 5), “Irony is an intentional speech-act ("misdirection") that serves to illuminate and persuade the reader of something that is subtle, complex, or misunderstood”. In that sense, the ironic usage in verse 25 and the rest of the narrative would be dealing with some important ideas that the author would like to transmit to the audience. Osborne sees irony and rhetoric working together (Osborne 2011: 5), and I consider his work important in the construction of the rhetorical argument I propose for Genesis 47.13-26.

After describing literary elements like plot, narrative and dialogue/direct speech, characters’ relationships and key words, and irony, it is possible to say that one of the intentions of the author of Genesis 47.13-26 is to denounce an unjust socio-economic system and to move the audience to resistance and struggle. This story could have such an effect in the ears of peasants from the North and the South of Israel, and in other groups positioned against totally centralized power, due to the old traditions of Israel as an egalitarian society. The story would ridicule the assumption of this state's actions as “life-giving” and at the same time would denounce the difficult living conditions they brought to most of the population. The arrangement of the events and the outcome of the story can be therefore understood as a strong critic of what the rulers had done with the population and a ridicule of the claims of bringing salvation and “pax” to the land. The real consequences of the rulers’ actions were the augmentation of the discontent and anger of a population who could see in the narrative a story that reminds them how they have been totally dispossessed by the rulers. The negative ending of the story is the call for the awakening of the population, as other accounts such as 1 Kings 12 narrate.

3.2 Genesis 47.13-26 and its rhetorical role in the Old Testament Tradition

I have described the possible rhetorical discourse of Genesis 47.13-26 as an isolated unity. However, to support this argument, it is important also to mention briefly some elements of the Old Testament tradition that contribute to strengthening the position assumed. For this, I refer to three sets of literary works. Two of them are the Joseph story in Genesis 47.13-26 and the texts of Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12. I dedicate entire chapters to discuss these passages in detail. Here, I just mention a few aspects that I believe important for this chapter. I briefly also refer to the importance of Exodus 1-14 in the ideo-theological and socio-economic role of Genesis 47.13-26. The three accounts contribute with their literary, ideo-theological, socio-economic, and socio-historical construction with the rhetorical dimension of Genesis 47.13-26.

The Joseph story is the literary context of the narrative studied here and provides interesting ideo-theological and socio-economic dimensions to understand in a deeper way the rhetorical role of Genesis 47.13-26. For authors like Reymer (1996) and Storniollo (1996), Genesis 37-50 is an apology

in favour of the monarchy. It portrays the institution of the king as the way God saves the people and provides them with abundance and security. From their perspective, therefore, this story is pro-monarchic and responds to the discussions raised in Israel by the establishment of the kingship. The inclusion of Genesis 47.13-26, a "strange" work in what seems to be a very homogeneous narrative, seems to affect the message given by the literary context and also have the function of contradicting the discourse it tries to build. Both have a contrary portrait of the monarchy and also a different vision of how the population should assume it. In addition, both could have a different image of the divinity and a totally contrasting socio-economic project. Interestingly, a word links the ideo-theological projects of both accounts. Genesis 50.20 and 47.25 share the word "hyx" (preserve lives), which makes a connection in terms of the monarchic discourse of salvation, although having a different function in each account, since in 50.20 it would fulfil the legitimizing discourse of the monarchy, while in 47.27 it would denounce it as impossible to save. The so-called insertion, then, is a voice of resistance in the middle of a text that wants to present the monarchy as salvific and portray the "God of Israel" as a divinity that seems to be far in nature from the liberator God of the ancient people. The Joseph story as a literary framework is therefore important for the socio-economic and ideo-theological project of Genesis 47.13-26.

Another account that plays an important role to understand the intention of Genesis 47.1-14 is Exodus 1-14. The story of Exodus not only shares elements related to despotic power and socio-economic exploitation in regard to the Egyptian context, but also seems to be, according to authors like Wittenberg (2007: 1-24), an account that denounces the unjust rule of king Solomon. This text, then, becomes a denunciation of the exploitation of the Israelites by this king and also promotes the faith in a different God: one who rejects oppression and is on the side of justice and freedom. In that sense, there is a connection between Genesis 47.13-26 and Exodus 1-14. Both of them are against the project of the Joseph story and resist its intention by showing the injustices of the rulers which evoke the actions of the Solomonic monarchy. Both of them are also literarily connected to an account that legitimates the monarchy, Exodus being just after it and Genesis 47.13-26 being an integral part of it. It could even be said that Genesis 47.13-26 is a mini version of the work in Exodus, since both have the same interest although the work in Genesis has a shorter length. With these connections, it can be understood that Genesis 47.13-26 announces what is about to come in Exodus, becoming a bridge between the apology of the Joseph story and a critique-invitation to struggle in Exodus 1-14. Genesis 47.13-26, being within the Joseph story and resisting it, as Exodus 1-14 will do later, pertains to the two accounts and makes sense in what both literary corpuses discuss.

Finally, I also mention the important role that Samuel 8.11-18 and I Kings 12 play for

understanding Genesis 47.13-26. Both stories show literary, socio-historic and ideo-theological connections with the text studied here. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 seems really close to Genesis 47.13-26, sharing a vocabulary that describes the dispossession of people by their rulers. For example, verses 14-17 narrates how the prophet explains that the king will take fields, the tenth of grain and flocks from the population, as it happens in Genesis 47.16-17 and 20. The account in Samuel portrays negatively the action of the rulers and mentions the cry of the people, as does Genesis, showing ideo-theological connections. In terms of 1 Kings 12, this account provides the example of the people rejecting the monarchic exploitative measures and inviting them to look for the creation of another reality. They not only denounce the exploitation that they suffer but also show the possibility of looking for alternatives of socio-economic organization. This contributes to what seems to be also intended in Genesis 47.13-26, where the text could also show the difficult situation of the people as a way to reject it and look for a different socio-economic program.

These three groups of texts tell about socio-economic and ideological conflicts that are close to what Genesis 47.13-26 narrates, which suggests that what I perceive in the text was actually possible in the Israelite context, and also that the interest to ridicule an oppressive economic system was part of the resistance methods of the population.

3.3 The art of ridiculing in Genesis 47.13-26

The literary, socio-historic and rhetorical aspects of Genesis 47.13-26 allow arguing that this is an ironic narrative, which ridicules the discourse of salvation defended by an unjust socio-economic system. At its literary level, the author of the story is very careful to describe the dynamics of a socio-economic system that was well known in ancient Israel. He describes the slow dispossession of the Egyptians, who lose their resources for sustenance, their ancestral and sacred land, and also their freedom, to become tenants and slaves of the rulers through tax, rent and debt. In addition, he shows how those in political and religious power, represented by Joseph, the Pharaoh and the priests, are the ones who promote an unjust reality not only by practicing oppressive economic mechanisms as taxation, but also by sustaining and legitimizing such practices as salvific and divinely institutionalized.

The tone of the story is a negative one, showing that the events that occurred are suspicious since they are full of exploitation and manipulation. What the narrator describes in his narrative has many connections to the socio-historic reality of the beginning of the United Monarchy. He tells about the shift in the economic organization of the land promoted by the establishment of a tax/rent, probably inaugurated in Solomon's time, if it existed. In addition, the narrator mentions slavery, what can be connected to the corvée labour initiated by David and perpetuated by his son. The description of the

people, impoverished to slavery and losing their ancestral properties, equals the reality of the Israelites at the moment of the monarchy, pressed by so many economic burdens that they were not able to sustain their families nor capable of avoiding losing their properties due to debt. Their cries in the story, fearing death, were probably the cries of the Israelites under Solomon's time, as 1 Kings 12 and Exodus 1-14 shows. The attempts to legitimize such an unjust system and present it as salvific are in the story in verse 25, echoing the struggle of the monarchy to make the people interiorize a discourse that confused oppression with grace. The socio-historic moment of Solomon's kingship, and also the subsequent years of the Israelites under the divided monarchy, fit very well the socio-economic chaos described by Genesis 47.13-26.

The narrator connects well the two realities to construct his rhetorical argument. On one side he shows without refrain the extremely unfortunate fate of the people, who have lost everything, have become indebted tenants and slaves, and are afraid of dying due to starvation. On the other, he shows the despotic and hard hearted behaviour of the rulers, who care for their revenue and see in the people only a source of wealth. The narrator names clearly the systems of oppression used: taxation and slavery due to debt are the ways that the rulers use to extract "legitimately" the people's resources. The effect on the audience must have been very strong, because the story narrates their own situation. They may have seen themselves as in the bodies of the Egyptians, seeing their properties go to the houses of the rich and the elites, as the animals of the Egyptians go to pharaoh's house. The effect may have been strong enough with the dispossession to have caused anger and frustration in the people, and even to move them to a desire to change things. However, the narrator was not happy with that, and included a reference that weakened the discourse of the rulers to provoke the audience to react. He calls the impoverishment salvific and gracious, in such an incongruity that would make the audience laugh at such"nonsense" and then consider that the time to change the situation had come. This is the point where the narrative becomes salvific and brings hope and strength to the people. The narrator reaches this effect by ridiculing the monarchy, its measures and its ideology.

To ridicule is to express an idea with the intention of provoking laughter in the audience and shame in the object ridiculed. It is to point out any detail of an action or idea that is shown to be unrealistic and non-sense when it asks for legitimation, due to the impossibility to confirm it in reality. It is a way to show strongly the falsehood, un-thinkability and impossibility of an argument to the point of causing laughter. It that sense, this type of discourse becomes an instrument that can be related to what Scott (2000: 24-25) calls hidden transcript, where those in subordination portray false images of themselves to the powerful in order to survive. To ridicule, then, can have the power to criticize in order to demonstrate and unmask the falsehood of an argument to the point that makes it un-defendable.

However, as Scott has mentioned, it is not always made overtly. To ridicule can be considered an attack intended to weaken the arguments or positions defended by someone through showing them in their real nature and not as they are presented.

This is what happens with Genesis 47.13-26, a narrative that ridicules by showing how an action or argument strongly defended by someone is proven to be so impossible in reality to the point that its defence causes laughter in those who hear it. Genesis 47.13-26 demonstrates the economic projects of the monarchy in Israel as incapable of being gracious and of bringing salvation to the population, since they can only promote the contrary results, creating poverty, distress and misery. The narrative shows that what has been defended as salvific by the state's discourse, in reality has other implications that are far away from what can be called "salvific". To put in the mouth of the Israelites words of "thanks" for their enslavement and the establishment of the taxation, is a way to mock and ridicule the arguments of the monarchy that it is God's channel to save the population. These evidence two things: That there was an oppressive power over the population that exploited them in diverse ways; and that the people were resisting, but not always in evident ways. Scott (2000: 26) deals with the strategy that the bigger the difference of power is between the groups, the more stereotypical and ritualistic a form the public transcript of the subordinate acquires. I think that phrases like the one in verse 25 could be a good example of Scott's description, as the words of the Egyptians seem to be a very stereotyped phrase.

Verse 25 only would have described the deepest dreams and intentions of the rulers, who hoped to have such a submissive and controlled people in order to extract resources from them more easily. However, text never reflects the reality, but the dreams and illusions of the rulers, who would like the population to behave as the Egyptians do in the story. The thanks to salvation is a tool to ridicule the aspirations of the rulers, contrasted strongly by the resistance they found in the population, who rejected and denounced their exploitative system. Such ridiculing demonstrates the weaknesses of the arguments of the oppressors and therefore make them more vulnerable, opening up the possibility to empower the audience by showing them the falsehood of those who claim power and legitimation. The author, by putting thankful words in the mouths of the Egyptians, unveils the rulers' desperate attempts to try to convince others, and even themselves, of their divine and positive role in the life of the people.

Genesis 47.13-26, therefore, not only describes negatively all the actions promoted by the monarchy, specially slavery/corvée labour and taxation. It also the impoverishment of the people through debts, actions by elites related to the state and the temple, the taking of the land of the people or making them lose their land to end up as tenants and day labourers. The story describes this and by calling it a salvation mocks the legitimating discourse of the monarchy which presented their actions as

Gods will to save the people. Salvation that has just caused death and suffering. The text is a counter discourse that resists the monarchy's legitimation and invites the people to see in the cruel reality of the Egyptians their own story. It is impossible for those who read/hear the text not to identify with the Egyptians, since both would have suffered the same fate by their rulers, and it would be impossible for them not to relate Joseph to the rulers of their time and even with Solomon, the archetype of the oppressive king. Salvation has been stolen by the rulers, and becomes a word/action dispossessed of its power and liberating dimension, being domesticated by the elites and powerful in order to dominate. By constructing what salvation means, the elites are able to manipulate the people and make them feel happy with a salvation that justifies and allows oppression and misery. The text becomes an instrument to help the people become aware of this harmful construction of salvation and judge it as a discourse constructed in the hands of those who govern them. In addition, the story gives the audience the chance to reject it and motivates them to construct new salvific realities by rejecting the model proposed by the rulers, as it occurs with the "revolted" Israelites in I Kings 12.

Here, ridiculing not only serves to shame and weaken the powerful and their oppressive, false, discourse; it also provides elements to reconstruct a new understanding and practice of salvation, from a different perspective and centred in the ancient Yahweh of justice. Ridiculing has the potency to become an instrument for decolonization and emancipation. It allows the oppressed groups to be empowered by weakening their oppressors, revealing them not as saviours but as death-makers, not as blessings but as curses. It helps the people to see clearly the fount of their poor situation, to see the oppressors as oppressors, and to accept that they have been fooled and manipulated by those who claim to be on their side. This will be their first salvation, because it will liberate their minds from the dominion of the oppressive discourse of the rulers. They will free their minds then to go on to free their bodies. They will be able to understand the political, ideological, economical and religious mechanisms used to oppress them, and then reject and transform them to create a new situation of life. Ridicule is an instrument for struggle and a tool to re-construct a new reality. It becomes a different way to read from a different perspective, a destruction of an oppressive discourse and a construction of a new perception of reality that challenges hegemonic discourses, ridicules them to diminish their power and impact, and opens the gate to construct new discourses that try to read the reality in a different way. From saviours, rulers are unmasked as oppressors. From blessed and saved, people can understand that they have been cursed and killed, denigrated and destroyed. This socio-economic system and worldview represented by those who govern, which abuse and exploit the majorities, has to be changed, and Genesis 47.13-26 wants to be a provocation for that. The "apparent" contradiction between Joseph's actions and the issue of salvation stops being the apparent but the real official

discourse that contradicts the reality of the people. The text gives the space so the audience definitively becomes aware of that.

As I have said, Genesis 47.13-26 could be understood as a narrative that rejects and criticises the unjust socio-economic system of the Israelite monarchy and ridicules its ideological and theological constructions presented as salvific but proven to be destructive. The story would seek to unveil the real impact of the socio-economic measures of the monarchy and de-legitimize its salvific discourse, together with empowering the population by showing it the weakness of the system and therefore provoking them to reject it and construct a different reality in accordance to the faith in the ancient God of the Israelites.

4. Conclusion:

In this chapter I have worked in the ideo-theological and socio-economic interests and principles that possibly motivated and are reflected in Genesis 47.13-26. My task was to understand the divine images and religious projects it portrays, the socio-economic organization it promotes, and the ideological interests it tries to legitimize. The rhetorical construction of the story, and in it the element of point of view, played an important role in this task.

In terms of socio-economic dimensions, the story seems to describe a common socio-economic organization in the Ancient Near East. It is the city-temple-state, where the power is centralized in a ruling class that extracts the resources of the people through measures like taxation, forced labour and debt loans. This system charged the population with several socio-economic burdens and "legitimized" a system of extraction. This system was used to dispossess the majority of the independent owners and pass the resources to a very small elite. It is presumed by authors like Gottwald (1979) that, the ancient Israelites had rejected this socio-economic organization and moved to live in an egalitarian project, but that the city-state model was re-introduced in the land when of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy and continued affecting the population in the subsequent centuries. Even though there are texts that seem to support an economic organization around the king and that includes an official state-cult, as the one I have just described, Genesis 47.13-26 seems to have another purpose.

By a negative representation of the monarchy's extraction system and legitimation, based on forced labour and taxation, the text seems to represent a different socio-economic model. It could belong to circles that reject the oppressive system implemented by the Israelite monarchy and that defend a type of egalitarian organization that guarantees land to produce for the population and protection measures when someone experiences economic distress. In that sense, Genesis 47.13-26 is close to other accounts like Exodus 1-14, 1 Samuel 8.11-18, 1 Kings 12 and of prophets like Micah and

Amos, that reject the exploitative economic project of the monarchy and claim for a more merciful and egalitarian society. The text, in that sense, provides a couple of important elements to a liberating project. It rejects an oppressive socio-economic system and also provokes the people to see their difficult situation and therefore do something to change it. It is a text of resistance, a text that stands against the destructive control of the few rulers over the massive population.

Regarding the ideo-theological elements, Genesis 47.13-26 shows two dimensions. The city-state economic project held by the monarchy and based on taxation and corvée was a hierarchic organization that accumulated the power in a few hands far away from the people. This broke the traditional organization of the tribes, which was more egalitarian and had a corpus of chiefs close to the people and their interests. The monarchy broke this system and installed a different division of the territory in order to extract resources, ignoring the power of the local leaders and installing courtiers to guide the life of the people. Both organizations were different not only in their social organization, but also in the theological projects that supported them. The one city promoted a centralized religious system with the state as the official voice; it used a temple to show the support of the divinity and this became the monopoly of the king and instrument to legitimize his power. The God it projected was not one who brought sanctions against the kingship and its measures, but instead who supported its exploitative measures against all the people. It gave the king divine nature and put him above his fellow citizens, and presented the elements such as forced labour, taxation and tithing as sacred demands from the gods.

However, Genesis 47.13-26 seems to be a project that is faithful to different theological roots. It could reflect those circles that believed in the ancient God of the tribes, the God who liberated Israel from the exploitation of the Canaanite city-states and who demanded an egalitarian society. This project rejected any divinity of a monarch or ruler that would justify oppressive measures against the majority, but gave all the people, as divine creation, equal dignity, value and right to enjoy of a good life. This theological vision is the one also backed by the prophets who denounced injustice and also spoke on behalf of the poor and oppressed in the name of the Yahweh of justice. The ideo-theological project of Genesis 47.13-26 then can also be understood as liberating[62]. It rejects the oppressive divinity constructed by the rulers and the elite class, interested in acquiring religious legitimation to exploit and control the people. It reminds the Israelites about their religious roots, the God who liberated them from economic oppression and his desire to construct a just society for them. In the story, the God of Joseph is not Yahweh anymore, as it seemed to be early in the Joseph story. Now his god is Pharaoh, as is demonstrated by the economic measures he applies and the way he benefits him with the resources of

[62] See chapter four and the discussions around the notions of liberation.

the people. The narrative never mentions the word “God”, but the previous information of Joseph and how he is accompanied by “God”, the character of the Pharaoh, divine-king, and the presence of the priests, are more than enough elements to make the sacred realm present in the story. The text invites us to reject the Pharaoh, the God of Joseph, and to distance ourselves from this traditional leader who has forgotten the sacred principles of the Israelites and assumed a project different and contrary to the God of justice. Genesis 47.13-26 is a text that also invites its people to go back to their ancestral faith and reject the project of the monarchy and the state who have stolen God, hidden the Ark that represents him, and distorted the project of liberation it brought to the population. Considered from these points of view, Genesis 47.13-26 can provide enough liberating elements to those who read the story and are interested in having instruments to support their struggle for emancipation.

Even though I have constructed an argument around all the elements provided by Genesis 47.13-26, this argument is supported by other biblical texts and interpretive traditions as well. This is why, in the next chapters, I deal with the literary context of Genesis 47.13-26, other texts of the Old Testament tradition that seem to be concerned with the monarchy and its socio-economic dynamics, and finally theories to interpret the story from a liberating perspective. Those chapters are useful and necessary to construct a stronger argument around the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects I propose for Genesis 47.13-26.

Chapter Two

Genesis 37-50 as literary context for Genesis 47.13-26

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the literary and socio-historic elements of Genesis 37-50 in order to discover what elements are part of its socio-economic and ideo-theological projects. Since I have defined Genesis 47.13-26 as a text that ridicules an exploitative socio-economic system and oppressive ideo-theological construction, the idea is to understand the positions of Genesis 37-50 in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological intentions, as it is the larger frame of reference where Genesis 47.13-26 functions to produce meaning.

There is no doubt that Genesis 47.13-26 has close connections with Genesis 37-50, in spite of the arguments that place it as a strange passage inserted in the larger section. 37 begins describing the story of the family of Jacob, being centred in Joseph who plays a special role in chapters 37 and 39-45, with some important mentions in the rest of the chapters until his death in chapter 50. Besides having the same character, sections like chapter 37 (with the discussions about one brother ruling over others), 41 (with the establishment of the taxation system), and 50 (with its ideo-theological construction of salvation through socio-economic injustice and total dominion over others) play an important role in defining the possible intention of Genesis 47.13-26. The work here, therefore, is to describe the characteristics of Genesis 37-50 and see how it connects with or disconnects from the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects of Genesis 47.13-26.

For this purpose, the chapter is divided in three sections. In the first one, I describe the literary dimensions of the whole section, paying attention to its content and genre, literary tools (plot, characters, repetitions, motifs), and specifically, look for the ideo-theological and socio-economic dimensions of its literary construction. Secondly, I discuss the socio-historic background of the literary compound, paying attention to the history of its composition, possible authorship, place and time of construction, and finally the main socio-economic and ideo-theological ideas of the world where it could have originated. The last section focuses on the connections and disconnections between Genesis 37-

50, with the passage of research, and Genesis 47.13-26, in terms of the socio-economic dimensions of the text's ideo-theological orientation. There, I compare their literary and socio-historic worlds, highlighting similarities and differences, finally discussing the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects they promote.

1. **Literary aspects of Genesis 37-50**

Genesis 37-50 is the fourth literary complex in the book of Genesis after the main sections about the beginnings (1-11), the sagas about Abraham (Genesis 12-25) and Isaac (Genesis 26), and about Jacob (Genesis 27-36). As I describe in this section, Genesis 37-50 has been traditionally known as a homogenous composite that tells the story of Joseph, son of Jacob. However, I also describe how some authors have challenged this assumption and show more complexity in the dynamics within the texts in these chapters. Therefore, the purpose of this first section is to understand the diverse literary dimensions of Genesis 37-50, its traditions, themes, preoccupations, and evocations, in order to perceive its wide range of messages and specially its interests in terms of ideo-theological and socio-economic issues. The aspects of content, genre, and different literary tools are used to achieve that.

1.1. Text and literary Genre:

The name "Joseph story" given to Genesis 37-50 represents some problems. It is true that Joseph as a character interacts throughout what seems to be a homogeneous enough narrative, which gives the idea that everything is carefully narrated to put all the attention of the readers on him. However, a careful reading shows that this set of chapters has certain literary disconnections at specific points, not only at the level of plot but also in terms of theme and character. This opens the option of raising other possibilities: to name the account as a whole, also to question its homogenous composition and begin an understanding of its diverse narrated events as signs of a complex process of composition.

The discussion around the narrated events in Genesis 37-50 and the way this section should be defined is wide. Turner (1990: 143) discusses this aspect when he says that the name "Joseph story" for Genesis 37-50 is not widely accepted anymore. He cites George Coats and his definition of Genesis 37-50 as "Jacob and his son's" story in order to define what he considers a more accurate name for this section (Turner 1990: 143). The question of what belongs to the Joseph story, to Jacob's story and to the whole of Genesis 37-50 shows a great diversity of opinion, with some little points of consensus.

Martin Noth (1972: 128-129), for example, considers that Genesis 37-50 contains what he defines as a group of legends about Joseph's experiences in Egypt and with his brothers. He therefore recognizes that the section is not only about Joseph, and accepts that the story can be understood from the events his character lives through in Egypt and the deferential interactions he has with the rest of the sons of Jacob. Even though Noth considers that the story is a well-constructed composition, he also

acknowledges that it presents some "disconnections" in terms of the Judah-Tamar story (Genesis 38), Joseph's agrarian policy (Genesis 47.13-26), and Jacob's blessings (Genesis 49.1-28). Writing in the first part of the twentieth century, Noth had already pointed out the main literary dimensions of Genesis 37-50, showing its main thematic interests (Joseph and the brothers) and some of the literary disconnections the story presents, setting the base for the work of coming authors.

Von Rad (1961: 347) agrees with what Noth had said about the Joseph story as a well-constructed composition, stating that that the Joseph story is "from the beginning to the end, an organically constructed narrative". To define what he considers to be the Joseph story, he proposes that chapters 37, 39 to 47, and 50 are those that deal strictly with it (Von Rad 1961: 347-348). As we can see, both authors exclude chapter 38 and some sections about Jacob, such as chapter 49; although Von Rad seems to believe that the agrarian policy does belong to the Joseph story since he says nothing explicit about it. Redford (1970) proposes a similar content to Von Rad in what he considers as the chapters that compose the Joseph story. For him, chapters "37.3-36, 39-45, 46.28-47.31, 50.1-21" are the ones that belong to the Joseph story, pointing out that chapter 38 has nothing to do with the plot and considering that it, instead, disrupts the story at a crucial moment (Redford 1970: 2,17). Even though Redford also admits that chapter 38 somehow disrupts the narrative, causing a pause in what is happens between 37 and 39 (1970: 17), he finds literary connections between this interpolation and the surrounding passages (For example, the deceptions of Jacob and Judah and the contrast between Tamar and Potiphar's wife.

For George Coats (1976: 55), the Joseph story is clearly a narrative that demonstrates a "remarkable internal unity". He considers that it is composed by chapters 37.1 to 47.27, complemented by secondary elements and additions in which are included chapter 38 (Coats 1976: 8 and 1983: 264), agreeing with the rest of the authors mentioned here. Westermann's position (1986: 22-23) is interesting, since he grants fewer chapters to the Joseph story than the authors previously discussed. He considers that 39-41 and 42-45 would be the sections referring to the son of Jacob, while 38 and 49 would be additions, and the rest of the chapters, 37 and 46-50, would belong to the traditions about Jacob (Westermann 1986: 22-23). His argument is important because it gives centrality to the events that Joseph lives through in Egypt in the conformation of the so called "Joseph story", while pointing out how other parts of Genesis 37-50 have a closer connection and even would belong to the traditions about Jacob and therefore to the patriarchal narratives[63].

[63] This is important due to the discussion around the role that Genesis 37-50 plays in relation to Genesis as a whole and also to the patriarchal narratives.

Storniollo (1996: 187), who approaches Genesis 37-50 from the ideological, theological and socio-economic aspects, considers that the so called "Joseph story" is composed of the chapters 37, 39-50. He excludes only the section about Judah and Tamar, as the rest of the authors mentioned do, and says nothing about the other passages that seemed to be interpolations or disruptive to the narrative (Storniollo 1996: 187). Reimer, who writes in the same year as Storniollo and is also interested to understand the ideological and theological implications of Genesis 37-50, gives a more detailed description of what he considers should be the Joseph story. He excludes chapter 38, but includes chapter 46 and 48-49 in the list of additions to the main work (Reimer 1996: 66).

For authors like Pirson (2002: 1), the issue that, in Genesis 37-50, several sons of Jacob have main roles in the story, which is enough to designate this section as the "story of the toledoth of Jacob". He thinks that Genesis 38, and 48-49 cannot be considered an integral part of the story (Pirson 2002: 2), closing what seems to be a clear consensus in regard to the chapters that compose the Joseph story, including the different voices and traditions found in Genesis 37-50. The "Joseph story", in other words, the tradition that is connected to the son of Jacob, is only one part of the different components of Genesis 37-50. This is important to understand in order to acknowledge the diverse traditions, and with these, the various voices and opinions that conform to the final section of the book of Genesis.

Understanding the complexity of Genesis 37-50, in terms of the narrated events and the difficulty in defining all it contains as the "Joseph story", is important. In this study, I treat the material as a unity and, therefore, try to perceive the meanings of the sections as a whole, taking the text just as it has been received by the tradition. I assume a more literary approach, such that of Laurence Turner. This author considers, for example, that chapter 38 enriches the message of the so called "Joseph story", and shows the connections, through literary relationships, between it and 37 and 39 in aspects like deceit, garments, and the reversal of primogeniture (Turner 2000: 164). Genesis 47.13-26 has been considered a section that does not correspond to the main plot line of what is understood as the Joseph story; I acknowledge that, but also work to see the literary and also the ideo-theological connections of this little section with the literary context. Although Turner is only preoccupied with the literary elements of the story, which are very valuable, in this chapter I combine them with the information provided by the historic-critical analysis, which I consider a necessary tool to understand in a deeper dimension all the possibilities that Genesis 37-50 offers in terms of meaning.

Different to the discussion about content, defining the genre of Genesis 37-50 seems to have been an easier task for different authors. Perhaps only Noth (1972: 128), who describes the section as legends, or Pirson (2002: 1), who considers it a tale, differ in certain ways from the main consensus that see in this account a novelistic narrative (Skinner 1930: 440; Redford 1970: 1; Von Rad 1961: 347

and 1976: 255; Coats 1983: 265). Westermann (1986: 26) is the writer who slightly differs with the others, defining the story as “belles lettres”, what he considers to be a composition that covers both the novel and the short story literary forms.

With this information, it can be concluded that Genesis 37-50 is an account that relates, in the form of a novelistic narrative, the events around the family of Jacob, with certain moments where Joseph, one of the youngest sons, plays the main role in the story.

1.2. Plot:

The plot of the story is centred on Jacob and his sons, with the participation of Joseph as the central character. He, in fact, has a special role in chapters 39-41 where the story relates about his whereabouts, and also plays an important role before and after this section. The story, basically, tells of a family conflict between brothers that reaches its culmination with their reconciliation, having other stories behind it that deal with Joseph’s rise to power in Egypt and Jacob’s family moving to this land in order to be saved from a famine. However, the authors under consideration have also pointed out distinct dimensions of the plot and chosen one aspect or the other to describe it.

For George Coats (1983: 271), the plot of the story is centred in the reconciliation of a divided family and the movement from Canaan to Egypt. The resolution of the story, according to this author, comes in 43.1 to 46, where the reconciliation of the broken family takes place, the family is preserved from the threat of starvation, and Jacob’s settlement in Egypt is depicted (Coats 1983: 293, 298). In Coats’ opinion, the dreams in chapter 37 play an important role, foreshadowing the development of the plot, recounting what is going to happen in 43-45 and are also an instrument to give symmetry to the narrative (Coats 1983: 269-270).

Westermann (1986: 24) considers that Genesis 37-50 is a family story combined with a political narrative. It tells, Westermann (1986: 24) argues, about the restoration of peace for Jacob’s family, this through Joseph’s elevation as a high officer in the Egyptian court. This author highlights the fact that it is Joseph and his economic policy that helps the family survive the difficulties that threaten their lives (Westermann 1986: 24). Considering that the main Joseph story is constructed by two events, Genesis 39-41 and 42-45, Westermann (1986: 26) suggests that both parts of the story want to deal with the relationship of a family form of community and the political society, showing God’s actions in both. For him, therefore, the plot reaches the familiar and social realms, and has not only Jacob’s family but also God as part of its events.

For authors like Storniollo (1996: 187), the plot in Genesis 37-50 if full of emotional moments that distract the attention of the audience in order to manipulate it to accept its discourse. He considers

that the dreams play an important role in the plot as they show the intention of the younger brother to reign over the older ones (1996: 187), as it finally occurs, not without the brothers' acting to avoid that happening (37.19-20). Storniollo (1996: 188) considers that the plot is interested in showing Joseph's capacity to govern, so its events would be organized to construct this character as an honest and trustworthy person who is supported by the divinity in everything he does, therefore, bringing blessing to all who is around him. This author, who seeks to unveil the ideological and theological interests in the narrative, sees in the plot a tool used by the narrator to make the audience accept everything Joseph does (Storniollo 1996:188). The most important moment of the plot, for Storniollo, is in chapters 42-44, where the brothers are pictured as humbly bowing down to Joseph and therefore accept becoming slaves of the system he represents (Storniollo 1996: 189).

In this, Storniollo agrees with Coats, who considers that the dreams "anticipate the brothers' subjugation to Joseph's power and foreshadows the account in Genesis 42 that brings the brothers into humble submission to an unknown powerful administrator in the court of Egypt" (Coats 1976: 13). Both authors see humiliation and submission as important parts of the plot. The end of the story's plot occurs in chapter 50, where it is said that all the events have occurred because of God's will, representing the closure of all the rhetorical functions of the plot, which would legitimize Joseph's privilege and powerful position over his brothers through divine means. We could say that Storniollo recognizes the familiar and political dimensions of the story pointed out by Westermann, although giving it a clearer and more ideological relevance to the construction of the events in Genesis 37-50. However, the main difference here is that Westermann sees the plot line only in certain sections of the story (39-45 mainly), while Storniollo considers almost the whole account (only excluding chapter 38) as part of it.

Turner (1990: 143) sees in the dreams of chapter 37 one of the key moments of the plot, this since they will play the role of announcing what is going to happen throughout the whole section of Genesis 37-50. Redford (1970) had already mentioned the important role of the dreams in the plot of this account. Seeing the Joseph story as a united compound, he finds in the dreams the main instrument used by the writer to keep the whole story together (1970: 68-69). Pirson (2002: 37) mentions that one of the roles Jacob plays in the plot is to show favouritism toward Joseph, actions that cause the negative feelings of the brothers. The result of this, considers Pirson, "is the violation and disruption of the peace" (Pirson 2002: 37), something considered one of the main themes in the plot, which later reaches its resolution in the reconciliation of the brothers in chapter 45.

The main lines of the plot, according to the authors, are the aspects about conflict-resolution between the brothers due to power struggles and the movement of the family from Canaan to Egypt in order to be saved from the famine. The rise of Joseph to a position of power in Egypt and the economic

reforms he applies are also mentioned, especially by Storniollo, who sees the theme of salvation (from the monarchy, as he understands Joseph's role in the story) as the central part of the plot, with the implications of domination and surveillance that it promotes. I agree with Storniollo's point of view, seeing that the plot is focused on presenting the "divine" guidance that gives Joseph total control over the others and also interprets the economic measures he applies as salvation.

1.3. Characters and Characterization:

In terms of the characters and characterization of Genesis 37-50, I discuss the different opinions about Joseph's portrayal in the narrative, since it is one of my goals to compare him as a character with the "Joseph" found in Genesis 47.13-26. I pay attention to how Joseph relates to other characters in the story, especially his brothers. An important aspect for the thesis is to see Joseph's relations with those who surround him and in one way or another are in power over him (Jacob, Potiphar, the chief jailer, Pharaoh), and not least, his relationship with the divinity.

Joseph is a very complex character, and a quick reading of Genesis 37-50 should be enough to perceive the ambiguity that forms part of his personality. Turner (2000: 158), who is one of those who think that Joseph is the dominant character of the story, recognizes his enigmatic personality, to the point of defining him to be "as unfathomable as God". Joseph is difficult to "define" as a character, and that is proved by the diversity of opinion of authors about him.

Joseph has been traditionally interpreted as a positive character, a hero of the Biblical tradition and of the Christian faith. All this, of course, responds to one aspect of the text of Genesis 37-50, which, in fact, seems to be interested in giving a positive image of the son of Jacob. Skinner (1930: 440), for example, recognizes that Joseph is idealized as no other patriarch in the narrative of Genesis, being portrayed as the "ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal servant, and the ideal administrator". Even though Skinner's reading of the text fits perfectly in the traditional conception about Joseph, his argumentation does not really seem to match what the story says. Although Joseph could evidently be considered the ideal servant and the ideal administrator for his Egyptian masters (Potiphar, chief jailer and the Pharaoh), the same positive role cannot be given to him within his family, where he enters in to direct conflict with his brothers and makes them and his father suffer terrible experiences of anguish (Genesis 42-44). Despite the very famous picture of Joseph as the "ideal" character, elements of his incongruences appear throughout the story when it is read carefully and other "faces" of the character start to appear.

In spite of this, the perception of Skinner is not really mistaken, because Genesis 37-50 seems to make great efforts to present Joseph in an "ideal" way. Authors like Storniollo perceive this literary

construction of the character as pointing out that Joseph is carefully delineated to gain the support of the audience (Storniollo 1996: 188). This author argues that in chapter 39 the writer's agenda is to show two specific aspects of Joseph (Storniollo 1996: 188). Firstly, since Joseph is demonstrated to be an honest person, the account supporting the idea that he is trustworthy (Storniollo 1996: 188; See also Von Rad 1976: 258). Secondly, five times (39.2, 3, 5, 21, 23) the chapter mentions that God/Lord is with him, therefore, giving the idea that Joseph is a specially blessed person who also spreads blessing to everyone around him (Storniollo 1996: 188). This, Storniollo maintains, is part of the rhetorical construction of the story and the character, having the purpose of making the audience accept all that Joseph does due to the divine support he enjoys (Storniollo 1996: 188).

The fact that the author mentions that God is with Joseph (39.2, 3, 5, 21, and 23), the reaction of the character at the request of Potiphar's wife, and his capacity to interpret dreams, strongly determine how the audience perceives Joseph. The first aspect, just mentioned, is the theological legitimation of the character, giving him authority in what he does and says and making the people feel convinced to agree with Joseph's actions or to at least doubt before criticizing them. This ideo-theological aspect has an important role in the story. It shows how strongly the author wants the audience to perceive Joseph in a positive way. The second element is related to the negative response of this character to lay with the wife of his master, which usually provokes positive commentary from authors who write on Genesis (for example Von Rad 1961). Some see in this action a very pious attitude that reflects Joseph's fidelity to God (Von Rad 1961: 364-365), an idea specially supported by the discourse in 39.9, when Joseph defines having laid with his master's wife as a sin against God. However, others have proposed that Joseph's actions have nothing to do with religious aspects, but with his "loyalty" to Potiphar (Coats 1983: 279). This second option is particularly interesting and needs to be considered, especially to understand Joseph as a character who repeatedly shows how important it is for him to please those in power and whom he serves faithfully (Jacob, Potiphar, the chief jailer, and the Pharaoh).

In addition, Joseph's religious piety seems to be exaggerated, taking into account that he mentions God on very few occasions and that his actions do not really fit in with what could be considered religious piety. Joseph mentions God in relation to dream interpretation, to the birth of his sons, and to his purpose in Egypt; however, his conflictive actions with his brothers and the socio-economic measures he implements are reasons to question his religious or pious behaviour. Joseph does not really demonstrate being more religious than his brothers or any other character, so religious piety does not seem to be an important part of his character. The final aspect, in terms of Joseph's positive construction, is related to the interpretation of dreams. This was considered one of the greatest

gifts given by the gods to humans (Storniollo 1996: 188), and this attribution presents Joseph, not only as a person supported by the divinity, but also as a man, with special wisdom and discernment, and therefore, with characteristics that legitimize his position of power over others. Coats (1976: 19), citing Von Rad, highlights the issue that Joseph is called "Lord of Dreams", in Genesis 37.18-20, a phrase that would refer to a person who "is empowered to receive prophetic dreams" (Coats 1976: 19). Joseph, in fact, is slowly empowered in the story, to the point of reaching the top of power in Egypt, where "no man shall lift hand or foot throughout Egypt" without his consent. According to certain moments of the story Joseph enjoys a special relationship with the divinity, who seems to bless all his deeds and also reveal the mysteries of his actions, the religious support that is the reason that Joseph is and deserves to be always put in a position of power.

This last aspect also plays an essential role in the characterization of Joseph. In the whole story, he is close to and in the service of the circles of power. When we read carefully the text and see Joseph's closer relationships with his father and brothers, in Potiphar's house, in prison, and with the Pharaoh, one can only conclude that Joseph has the characteristic of attaching to those who have the power and who are at the top of the structure of domination. With his father, Jacob, Joseph plays the role of informer, bringing his father news about his brothers (37.2), which are usually negative, and also he is sent as emissary of his father to discover their whereabouts (37.13-14). Joseph gains Jacob's trust by betraying his brothers, creating a gap between his relatives in favour of the "job" he does for his father. This conflict with those around him does not really seem to bother Joseph, who enjoys the privilege of his service by acquiring a higher status over his brothers, no matter that he is the youngest, having the preference of his father and also receiving special gifts (37.3). This attitude will bring him some trouble with those whom he betrays, but will not stop him behaving in the same way in the other, later contexts. However, it describes much about Joseph's lack of care about having conflict with the "less" important or with causing them problems and afflictions, if, in so doing, he can please those who can give him power and privilege.

The events in Potiphar's house and in jail echo what happens in the family. Joseph earns the trust of those in the highest position of power: Potiphar and the chief jailer, and therefore a relation of mutual benefit is created. As the captain of the guard, Potiphar was able to "see" that "the Lord was with Joseph", putting him in charge of all the house. Potiphar seeks to take advantage of Joseph and his "divine" gifts, and at the end receives blessing in the house and field (39.5). Joseph, therefore, plays an important role for Potiphar, making sure that he can prosper economically (house and field). At the same time, Joseph gains a position of privilege in the house of the captain of the guard, being "overseer in the house and of all he had" (39.5a), and having access to everything but to his wife

(39.9a). Both men enjoy this situation of privilege until the period finishes with the episode of Potiphar's wife and her denunciation of rape against Joseph. However, as it happens within Jacob's family, the story recounts how Joseph again reaches a position of power and control by making sure of bringing "prosperity" to those who are in a higher position than he is, what at the same time gives him a privileged role and a comfortable situation. In what seems to be a parallel scene, where the events seem to be repeated, Joseph is sent to jail, where very quickly he is given a privileged position "between his equals" in the role of carer for all the prisoners and also being committed to "whatever was done there" (39.22). Even though Joseph's work should be to "care for all the prisoners" (39.22), what the narrative tells us is about the advantages that his actions brought to the chief jailer, who did not have to worry of the success of his responsibilities because Joseph would take care of them. Again, Joseph works to please the one who is in control, receiving benefits in exchange, in this case the control over everything in the prison. His interest in power and in the benefits it brings seem to be a temptation too difficult to resist by the son of Jacob.

The last space where the dynamic of power-benefit is important in Joseph's life is the Egyptian court. Here Joseph finds political and religious power that will again motivate his behaviour and establish his rewards. The Pharaoh finds in Joseph a faithful servant who demonstrates willingness to do everything to gain the favour of his new master. In their first encounter, surrounded by the mystery and tension raised by Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph's first response is to acknowledge his and God's favour to the king of Egypt: "God will give Pharaoh a favourable answer" (41.16). Joseph's words here are very revealing since he first of all assures that God is on Pharaoh's side and wants good for him, and secondly since Joseph, in certain way, foreshadows the benefits Pharaoh will get from the famine: all the resources of the land and total power over his population. After hearing the dreams, Joseph in 41.16, tells Pharaoh what is about to happen and how to respond to it in order to gain the highest benefit. Joseph speaks about the famine and recommends Pharaoh to do two specific things: choose a special person to lead the urgent actions of gathering food; and execute an economic reform to tax the fifth of the produce of the population for Pharaoh's barns (41.34-35). Both recommendations please Pharaoh, who will benefit from the re-collection of the produce because he can then sell back the food to his own citizens and foreigners, making a profit from the resources of the people.

In addition, Joseph's actions will result in Pharaoh owning all the land, silver and cattle of Egypt, establishing a totalitarian control over the population who will become his slaves under a perpetual system of taxation (Genesis 47.13-26). Joseph again acts in favour of those in power, no matter the difficult situations that his actions bring to the rest of the people. Joseph does not do this because of faithfulness to Pharaoh or for the desire to see this king prosper even more. Joseph,

himself, benefits greatly from the recommendations given by the Pharaoh. First, he is chosen to be part of the Pharaoh's court and to control all Egypt, having only Pharaoh over him (41.40-41). In addition, Joseph consolidates his position of power by marrying the daughter of a priest (41.45); he now belongs to the Egyptian high class, giving him political, religious and economic influence. Joseph's actions for Pharaoh automatically bring positive results to his life, and this can be understood as one of the main reasons why Joseph acts and speaks as he does. Together with the court of Pharaoh, Joseph is now in the Egyptian priestly class. He receives the "privilege" to enter this elite, and as it is his habit, repays this "gift" by granting them some favours, which includes not taking their land and exonerating them from the tax paid to the Pharaoh (Genesis 47.22, 26).

Joseph justifies the actions recommended by saying that they will contribute so the country "will not be devastated" (41.36). However, Genesis 47.13-26 proves him wrong, because the people are indeed devastated by the measures taken and only Pharaoh, the priests and Joseph's own family (12.11-12) avoid the ruin in the time of famine.

Behind this pious behaviour and good intentions, Joseph reflects the interest to reach the circles of power, doing what is necessary to get there and enjoy its benefits. The consequences are always positive for those in power and for himself, but negative for those in submission, like the brothers and the Egyptians. Everywhere Joseph goes he seems to pursue power. Joseph's actions in Egypt are presented as or usually understood to be bringing prosperity and blessing, or, that is what the discourse of the story seems to be concerned to present. However, what is not said is that such benefits strictly belong to those who are in power. He is in fact a channel of "blessing", but it is for those he serves and who can give to him something in return. There is no report that his actions bring good for others, and even in one place it is said that he take things away from the majority of people to give to those that he serves (Genesis 47.13-26). In certain ways, this characterization of Joseph fits the proposal of those who think that this character is the model for the ones in preparation to serve the king at the court (Storniollo 1996: 188), whose major role is to act for the benefit of their master. Therefore, Joseph's capacity to bring blessing to others can be put into question, and again highlight the ambiguity of his person.

Although I have described how suspicious the behaviour of Joseph can be around the circles of power, some authors have seen in Joseph's actions and words traces of ancient wisdom, finding in his relationships with those in authority the perfect behaviour of the classic wise men. Von Rad (1976) was the first to perceive elements of ancient wisdom in Genesis 37-50 and especially in Joseph's character, considering him a model in this area. According to this author, Joseph is able to become an officer in Pharaoh's court due to his ability to speak in public and give proper advice (Von Rad 1976: 257).

Wisdom becomes, in readings like this, another attribute of Joseph's character. Von Rad insists in this, proposing that the ancient wisdom is characterized by education, knowledge, moderation, kindness, and self-control, and sees in Joseph a perfect image of all these "virtues" (Von Rad 1976: 257). Joseph demonstrates this behaviour in his relationship with his brothers, becoming the "silent cabal" of the Egyptian wisdom (Von Rad 1976: 258), something that can be seen, especially at the moment when Joseph meets his brothers in Egypt (42-44).

I do not doubt that, what Von Rad signals here are the criteria to define a wise man in the ancient world, or that Joseph represents one of them, but this appreciation of the character provokes me to raise certain questions. Evidently, the type of wisdom that Von Rad highlights as virtuous in Genesis 37-50 contributes very little to our context and its struggles for liberation and justice. If we are going to accept Von Rad's argument on wisdom, then we will have to accept that such virtue is a promoter and manipulator of political, theological and economic injustice, as it is practiced by Joseph in Genesis 41 and 47.13-26, to mention some texts. Even though this could be a "too modernistic assumption", as Von Rad has called other positions in regarding the possibility of the type of thinking in Ancient Israel[64], it still works to question the perception about wisdom of the Old Testament: Can a wise person bring poverty and suffering to an entire population? Is it part of his role? In the book of 1 Kings 3-11, which works as Solomon's legitimating document, this king asks for wisdom with the purpose to rule with justice (1 Kings 3.9-11). The text implies, therefore, that justice has to be a result of wisdom and wise administration. In verses after this prayer, the writer says in 1 Kings, there was peace and abundance for the Israelites in Solomon's time (1 Kings 4.20 and 5.5), a situation that should be the result of the wisdom of the ruler[65]. How then can Joseph even match the model of ancient wisdom if his actions bring such socio-economic chaos to the population? The wisdom perceived by Von Rad refers clearly to the discourse valid only in the court, the rulers being the ones who benefit only with this type of wisdom. For the Old Testament tradition, and for our context, the wisdom of Joseph, which manipulates the people and is put in the service of the rulers and their unjust projects, needs to be rejected. This discussion about Genesis 37-50 and Genesis 47.13-26 is continued later in this chapter. Nevertheless, as it has already been discussed, Joseph, as representative of ancient wisdom, can also show the ambiguity of his characterization.

God's company and support is also another element used to characterize Joseph that provokes questions. I mention how, in chapter 39, five times the author repeats that God is with Joseph and

[64] Brett (2000) highlights that Von Rad calls "too modern" those interpreters who criticize Joseph for being unjust and who think that the people would feel uncomfortable by his economic measures.
[65] I follow here, the ideological position within the text, which tries to convince its audience of the positive rule of Solomon, a situation that is contradicted in others' texts that demonstrate the suffering of the people under the rule of this king.

helps him succeed in everything he does. In this chapter, Joseph is in Potiphar's house and also in jail, and God's care allows him to reach a position of power and also bless those around him. This is the only example, at the beginning of Joseph's time in Egypt, where the author says that God is with this character; in spite of this, it is enough to influence the audience and make them believe in Joseph's divine support. The other references to this special relationship between Joseph and God come from the same character or from Pharaoh in discourses that generate suspicion because they seem to have rhetorical interests behind them. Joseph argues that God is with him to interpret dreams (40.8 and 41.16 and 28), to settle in Egypt (41.51-52), and to be in power in Egypt to play a "salvific" role (45.5 and 50.20). On the other hand, Pharaoh states that God is with Joseph when he interprets the dreams and also describes the measures to be taken to deal with the famine (41.38-39). Both Joseph and Pharaoh's descriptions about God, interestingly, are related to economic matters and issues about power, mainly stating that God is with Joseph when he implements the system of taxation (41.38-40), when he starts a new life in a city and court context in Egypt (41.51-52), and when he takes a position of pre-eminence over his brothers (50.20). However, these descriptions seem to fit more with what Joseph and Pharaoh think. Authors like Coats maintain, for example, that in chapter 41 "Joseph's interpretation and counsel derive basically from his own skill rather than from divine intervention" (Coats 1976: 27). Coats continues saying that, "To be sure, he (Joseph) attributes his interpretation to God. But there is no divine intervention in the process of interpretation" (Coats 1976: 26). In this quotation, the author mentions the suspicion I mention earlier about God's direct contact with Joseph, especially at the moment of the proposal of the taxation system.

What can be said about this is that before entering in the service of Pharaoh, the narrator is sure that God accompanies Joseph. However, the presence of God seems to disappear slowly while the story moves, to the point that in 44.5 Joseph seems to need other resources for divination, almost implying that God is not helping him in that area anymore. This special reference to the goblet is actually very important; it does not only speak about Joseph's distance from the divinity, but also that he is practicing something against the sacred traditions of Israel, and therefore of its God (Greifenhagen 2002: 38; confirm in Leviticus 19.26 and Deuteronomy 18.10). God's support of Joseph, therefore, can be put in doubt due to these little details of the narrative, which seem to present an ambiguity between the discourse of the character and "his boss" (Pharaoh), who claims that God is with Joseph, and other situations of the story which seem to portray a distance between them. Due to these characteristics, the religious support to Joseph in Genesis 37-50 is considered a way to bring theological legitimation to the actions and discourse of the character, an element of the story that I discuss in the next section.

God starts to disappear from Joseph's side at the moment he enters the service of Pharaoh; this could imply that Joseph's actions under his new master, and specially the economic measures he takes to deal with the famine (41), come from somewhere else and not from the God of his fathers, as Coats (1976: 26) proposes. This could be said also about Joseph, his assumption to power in the Egyptian context and his services to Pharaoh, living in the court and being like any other Egyptian. Greifenhagen (2002: 36) notices Joseph's absorption by the Egyptian context, saying that he "is given an Egyptian theophoric name, marries an Egyptian woman and becomes the son in law of an Egyptian priest". Due to this, "Joseph becomes functionally an Egyptian" (Greifenhagen 2002: 36). His God also becomes a different one. All the devotions of Joseph are now to the Pharaoh, and his religion has become the one of the official and high-class priesthood. This change in Joseph's "religious fidelity" is part of his ambiguous characterization. As mentioned in Chapter One, Joseph seems to go through a process of change. He moves from his father's house to the city, and then to the Pharaoh's palace. This process also has influences on his construction as a character. In his father's house, he has a conflict with his brothers and is sold as a slave (37.28[66]); in the house of Potiphar he is accused of something he did not do and sent to jail using deception (39.7-20); and in jail, people take advantage of him and forget his precious service (40.23). He is mistreated as a human and used either as an object to make profit (by his brothers in 37.28, by the Ishmaelites-Midianites in 37.36 and 39.1; by Potiphar in 39.5; and Pharaoh in 47.14, 20 and 26) or as a sexual slave (39.7). These actions play a part in forming the "negative side" of Joseph's character. Even though from the beginning he tended to be pretentious and attracted to the spaces of power (37.5-11), the actions mentioned before can be understood as events that mark Joseph's character as bad.

Joseph inflicts on others what he experiences. He takes revenge on his brothers, deceiving them, enslaving one of them, making them experience fear and anguish (42-44), probably, as he felt in the pit where he was thrown, or, when he was sold as a slave or was sent to jail by Potiphar. He has no difficulty in seeing people as merchandise, as happens with the Egyptians (47.21), acting in the same way as those who sold him and bought him as a slave. Joseph becomes "deaf" to the cries of mercy and help; no one heard his lament in the pit (42.21), now he is impeded by, or has decided not to hear other's cry, as happens with the pleas of his brothers (42.10-17) or the Egyptians imploring for mercy (47.15 and 19). The narrator of Genesis 37-50 constructs Joseph in a very creative way, and while he is interested in presenting Joseph positively, other aspects of his character emerge and make him a very complex person. Turner (1990: 163) has been able to perceive this, stating that Joseph is portrayed "neither as a complete villain nor as a complete saint, but like most humans has elements of

[66] This verse is still unclear in terms of if Joseph was sold to Ishmaelites or was rescued from the pit by the Madianites.

each." This is the reality and one of the conclusions of Joseph as a character. It cannot be denied that the story seems to try to present him positively, but in the same way it shows other dimensions of Joseph that weaken this picture.

The final concern of Joseph as a character is his resemblance to other persons from the Old Testament tradition. For authors like Storniollo, Joseph is an exact portrayal of King Solomon (Storniollo 1996: 189). This author argues that the resemblance is basically in two areas: that both marry an Egyptian woman and that both are related with the implementation of the tributary system (Storniollo 1996: 189). Storniollo's approach is interesting in that, considering the necessity to discuss the possibility of the existence of King Solomon and his socio-economic measures, the position taken by this author can provide insights to understand the social and theological world behind the story and the rhetorical discourse that it portrays. Robert Coote (1991), on the other hand, considers that Joseph's portrayal in Genesis 37-50 is an image of the first king of Israel, Jeroboam, and that the events lived by the son of Jacob in this account resemble Jeroboam's way to the throne of the Northern tribes. Coote sees links between Jeroboam and Joseph in different areas. Both "suffer peril at the hand of a brother", Joseph of Judah (which would resemble Solomon) and Jeroboam by Solomon himself (Coote 1991: 92). In addition, both "owed their political survival to pharaoh and were launched into ruling orbit by pharaoh's decree" (Coote 1991: 92). Coote also sees another connection between Joseph and Jeroboam in the aspect of wisdom, proposing that even though "Joseph's wisdom is akin to Solomon...", "Joseph's wisdom and good sense mirror Jeroboam's similar pretention of enlightened rule" (Coote 1991: 92). The dreams are another element that Coote interprets as a link between Joseph and Jeroboam. The moment where eleven stars bow down to Joseph in one dream, one of those being Judah, would "be a sign that Jeroboam, as any monarch, would enjoy conquering Judah if he could, and that he expected to win the war against Rehoboam" (Coote 1991: 92). For Coote, the Elohist tradition of the Joseph story is concerned about saying that Joseph is Jeroboam, and that also happens with Joseph in the story. Jeroboam's role is one of "bringing the tribes of Israel back to life" (Coote 1991: 93-94), and this is connected to the negative experience under the rule of the Davidic house.

Both Storniollo and Coote give Joseph a more politicized and ideological characterization, but the interesting aspect of their arguments is that the two of them are positioned in conflicting "sides" or socio-political parties, one giving Joseph a Judahite background while the other giving him an Israelite one. In spite of this, the role of Joseph in both would be the same: to portray positively the ruler of the time. Brett (2000) also thinks that Joseph evokes another biblical person, proposing that this character is related closely to Ezra. Brett, who analyses Genesis from the time of its possible final edition at the second temple period, considers that Joseph and Ezra are related in two main things: "both have

access to a state power, and both have masked this power with the discourse of piety" (Brett 2000: 131). Contrary to Coote and Storniollo, Brett's opinion is that Joseph is presented as a negative character and represents a critique of Ezra's rule as representative of the Persian administration in Judah, especially in issues related to land and property (Brett 2000: 118-119). This view would provide a different possibility to understand Joseph as a character, in that the story would make his audience have a negative image of him.

Another aspect that plays an important role in Joseph's characterization is the portrayal of his brothers. Their relationship throughout the story is characterized by a struggle for power, where the brothers have every chances of losing. Coats points out the unequal conflict for power from the perspective of the narrator, who introduces Joseph by specifying "his age, his occupation, and his relationship with his brothers", while the rest "are subordinated to Joseph by being defined simply as Joseph's brothers". This introduction of the story has a double effect: It sets the primary role of Joseph in the story and also influences the audience to side with him instead of the brothers.

According to Westermann (1986: 38), in 37.7, when Joseph recounts the first dream, the brothers are able to understand the metaphor at once: "it can only mean that he will rule over them; be their king". This author perceives a clash of social orders that is being disrupted here, mentioning that "the brothers…represent the old order which they see threated by the youngest brother arrogance" (Westermann 1986: 38). For Storniollo it is very clear that Joseph's dreams are not innocent but that instead show his intention to govern over his family (Storniollo 1996: 187). The brothers respond quickly to the threat of becoming servants of their brother. According to Storniollo (1996:187), the brothers in the story emulate Yahweh's liberated tribes, which would not accept that one of them rules the others. He proposes that the attempt to eliminate Joseph through death or exile was the logical reaction in order to eliminate the evil from its roots, this because anyone who desired kingship would desire a highly contested evil (Storniollo 1996: 187). From the beginning, therefore, the theme of the conflict between the brothers and the struggle for pre-eminence of one over the others is stated clearly. However, the brothers are destined from the beginning to lose this fight. The climax of the conflict is reached in chapters 42-44, where the brothers are humbly pictured bowing down to Joseph and accepting to submit to the tributary system (Storniollo 1996: 189).

It could be said that the role of the brothers in the story is to invite the audience to accept humbly the pre-eminence of one person over the rest. Their attempt to eliminate Joseph would certainly put them in a negative role, this since the legal traditions of Ancient Israel would consider the action of killing a brother as punishable by death (Brett 2000: 133; confirm in Exodus 21.16 and Deuteronomy 24.7). This aspect could play an interesting role in the story, discouraging those who resist a monarch

and his pretensions. However, in case this did not work, the author also includes an irony that would detain such actions against the ruler. Brett (2000: 111) mentions how, ironically, the brothers, in their attempt to frustrate the fulfilment of Joseph's dreams, put in motion a chain of events that will lead to his ascendance. The message is clear: there is no need to spend time trying to avoid the inevitable. The eventual attitude of the brothers in 42.1, is the more intelligent step they can take; it, of course, would have to be repeated by the audience, who is invited to bow down to any person that has Joseph's role. In spite of this characterization of the brothers as ones destined for submission, the struggle and resistance that they represent in the story is interesting, and one can think of the possibility of hearing another voice that is not as happy with the unequal power relations that are described in Genesis 37-50.

There is another aspect in the brothers/Joseph relationship. The brothers and the father benefit from Joseph's position, almost as an invitation to think that the pre-eminence of one brother is beneficial and "a blessing" for the rest. Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy grain in order to survive the famine, and they not only receive free supplies (42.25 and 44.1), but are also invited to spend that difficult time in Egypt, under the protection of their powerful brother (45.16-20). In Egypt, Jacob's family receive the best lands of the country and all the food they need (465.16-20 and 47.13), which makes them fructify and see their possessions increase greatly (47.28). However, other elements show that the situation is not as ideal as it seems. The family goes to live in Rameses (47.11), a city that is described here as "the best of the land" but that in Exodus 1.11-12 is described as one of Pharaoh's store-cities, the symbol of exploitation, extraction and totalitarian power of the king. The scene here could be a message of the future of the family in the system implemented by the brother in eminence, where they will be enslaved and destined to work for the one who rules. In addition, it is clear that the brothers do not really trust the brother with whom they fight for power (50.15-17) and that their destiny will be to live with that sensation of fear.

This overview of Joseph's and other characters' portrayal in the story is useful to understand the different themes discussed in Genesis 37-50, and especially the ones related to power relations and domination. It seems that there is a great interest in portraying Joseph as a trustworthy man with the divine right to rule, and therefore to support the government of the person Joseph evokes. However, there are some elements that also play a role to weaken Joseph's positive construction, and which need to be taken into account because of the resistance they can represent in terms of the discussions around totalitarian power.

1.4. Setting:

In both Genesis 47.13-26 and 37-50 the setting is central to an understanding of the messages in this section. At the beginning it is mentioned that Jacob sends his beloved son Joseph to Shechem in search of his brothers who are in charge of their father's cattle (37.12-14). This location has caught the attention of some authors like Brett (2000: 110), who consider that "Shechem is the last place in the entire land of Canaan for the sons of Jacob to graze flocks". The author reminds that this was the place where Dinah was raped in Genesis 34 and also mentions that it is a city with a history (Brett 2000: 110), probably due to the bloody conflict between Simeon and Levi and its citizens (Genesis 34.25-31). The place, therefore, can in a certain way suggest what is about to happen in the story. It reminds about the violent behaviour of the brothers. Even though Joseph's brothers do not harm him there, but in Dotan, the connection with the place can make the audience think that no good is going to come from Joseph's search for his brothers.

The second setting of importance is the place where most of the action takes place: Egypt. For authors like Greifenhagen (2002), Egypt plays an ambiguous role in Genesis 37-50. He points out how from chapter 37 its negative characteristics start to appear, especially in the verse when Joseph is taken to Egypt as a slave (Greifenhagen 2002: 34). This author thinks that the negative issue does not change at later stages in the narrative, since in chapter 39 the place also becomes an area "of deception and danger" (Greifenhagen 2002: 35). Egypt also represents ideological and theological changes for the Israelite audience who read the story. Greifenhagen (2002: 37) says that the formula "I am Pharaoh" in 41.41 is encountered in the other parts of Genesis only on the lips of the divinity. This characteristic, besides the fact that the Pharaoh assumes the right to grant authority and land, tell the audience that the Pharaoh is playing a role analogous to God and usurping his place, something that would suggest a negative portrait of Egypt, its king, and the religious system behind them (Greifenhagen 2002: 37). Storniollo (1996: 189) also notices that the story promotes an ideological turn in the symbolism of Egypt, proposing how this place, symbol of and exploitation through the tributary system, is transformed in the story to become a place that preserves life. Egypt and its political project of oppression are portrayed as a "blessing" for those who live under it. The rhetorical aspect of the story is demonstrated here, but again offers more than one option, it demonstrates the negative implications of the land of Egypt on one side, but on the other the efforts to change this assumption to a more acceptable one for the Israelite audience.

Finally, the aspect I want to highlight about setting, in terms of specific place, is related to the mention of Rameses in 47.11. According to Brett, this place that is related to the area where Jacob and his family are going to settle in Egypt (47.11), is just an allusion to the suffering of Israel at a later time, when they will be exploited by Pharaoh in Exodus 1.11. This reference then, may suggest that even

though everyone is happy for the "blessings" found in Egypt, the place where they are going to settle soon will be transformed from a site of fruitfulness to one of suffering, pain and despair.

Time also plays an important part in a story setting, as I mention in the first chapter of the thesis in regard to Genesis 47.13-26. Time is constantly referred to through Genesis 37-50. In 37.2 and 41.46, for example, the narrator gives Joseph's age. With this information, the audience knows that 13 years have passed from Joseph's movement to the house of Jacob to his rise as Pharaoh's minister. However, of those 13 years, the narrator has only paused to describe central elements such as the plot of the brothers against Joseph, Jacob's lamentation for Joseph's death and Joseph's success in Egypt. In chapter 41.1, for example, the narrator states that two years have passed after Joseph's encounter with the Pharaoh's ministers in jail (Genesis 40). That verse only narrates what happens in two years. However, from verses 2 to 45 the narrator describes what happens in one night and one day in the Pharaoh's court. The narrator plays with time to emphasize the Pharaoh's problem and in how Joseph speaks wisely to solve it and then is rewarded by the king of Egypt.

In chapter 42 we can also perceive the play on time by the narrator. Verse 29 mentions the moment Joseph's brothers arrive in Canaan, probably after days of travelling. Only this one verse contains a long length of time. However, verses 1-28 and 30-38 correspondingly narrate Joseph's dialogue with his brothers and Jacob's encounter with his sons. Encounters that could have lasted one hour each, or less, take more than 30 verses. This is one of the narrator's tools to emphasize the dialogues of the characters.

At the end of the story, in 50.26, there is a last reference to time in the story. The narrator says Joseph died in his 110th year, living most of his time in Egypt as a courtier. The reference to his life can also be understood as God's blessing, since the divinity allows him to live a long life. Again, this aspect may be useful to legitimate Joseph as a character. Time, therefore, plays an important role in the construction of the setting in Genesis 37-50.

1.5 Motifs and literary sources:

This last element combines literary (motifs) with socio-historic (sources) analysis, as a way to bridge this section with the following one. Genesis 37-50 is a novelistic narrative composed by different motifs of the ancient world. As I discuss, the intended author(s) of this narrative composed the story mixing the plot with several "recurrent situations" and characters in the writings of Israel's neighbours. Here, I mention some motifs that are important to understand the composite dimension of the story, which in some have understood as biographical, but which has been denominated many years ago as a fictional narrative. In addition, the motifs contribute to the rhetorical construction of the story, offering

elements to understand the dynamics within it and the message that the author would like to transmit to his audience.

One of the first motifs perceived in the story is the one where the younger brother lords or rules over the elders, found for example in Egyptian literature (Redford 1970: 88; Turner 2000: 158). This motif is repeated in Genesis, as happens with Isaac (Genesis 21) and Jacob, and in the preference for Abel over Cain (Genesis 4). Within Genesis 37-50 it is also present, for example, in the sons of Tamar (Genesis 38.28-39 in the struggle for primogeniture between Perez and Zerah) and Joseph (Genesis 48.13-29 with Ephraim and Manasseh). The motif could in a certain way legitimize the rights of superiority of the younger over the older, and would be very useful in cases such as that of David and specially Solomon, who are the youngest in their family but end up governing over all the people (Conf. 1 Samuel 16.1-13 and 1 Kings 1-2). Genesis 39 relates about the situation between Joseph and Potiphar's wife. This element also was commonly used in ancient literature, being denominated the motif of the scorned woman (Skinner 1930: 442; Redford 1970: 91; Westermann 1986: 26-27). Popular also in Egypt[67], in the Joseph story it seems to have the function of "highlighting" Joseph's virtues. Through it Joseph becomes a man being able to resist the "temptation" that women represent (Unlike Samson in Judges 16, for example), and therefore contributes to a solid construction of the characters and an easier acceptance of his person by the audience.

Westermann (1986: 37) mentions the motif of the garment in relation to Joseph's sleeved tunic. He highlights the "great social significance of dress, which for thousands of years has been one of the most striking and powerful indications of social rank" (Westermann 1986: 37). Pirson (2000: 33) agrees with this social function of the garment, stating that Joseph's type of garment "is worn by laymen, women and priests…being not suitable for labour and therefore not made for ordinary people." He continues by saying that "the daughter's kings wore such garments" and that the main indication of the meaning of the word "tn<ToKu" is "looked for at the royal court, and consequently…supposed to be a royal garment" (Pirson 2000: 34). Westermann (1986: 37) also sees this point, mentioning that the garment functions to differentiate Joseph's position in regards to his brothers; this happens also in 41.42, where Joseph is dressed by the Pharaoh as a symbol of his new social status and high rank in the Egyptian court. The garment here is used to characterize Joseph and to show his power and influence. Also, it works to describe Joseph's moments of suffering, where he is dispossessed of the power acquired and put into prison (39.12-13). The motif of the garment functions to describe Joseph's rank in different moments of the story, and also has a particular function in the deceptions that take

[67] Westermann 1986: 28. See here also the connection between the motif of scorned woman and the Egyptian tale of the two brothers.

place in the story, being used to trick Jacob (Genesis 37.32-33) and Potiphar (39.16-20) and Judah in Genesis 38.

The famine also plays as important role as one of the motifs in the story (Redford 1970: 98; Westermann 1986: 28). It is common to find a famine threatening the survival of the people in the Old Testament tradition (Genesis 12.10 and 26.1; 2 Kings 25.3; Isaiah 29.8; Jeremiah 14.16; Ezekiel 5.16). In our story, the motif could function in two aspects. Firstly, to show Joseph's capacity of "saving the population from disaster", portraying his as a positive character and his rule as a blessing for the entire land. Secondly, to be used as an excuse to change the socio-economic model of the land. It will help the people "stop" depending on the unstable conditions of the seasons and trust in the more stable organization of the state, which uses this disaster to implement the taxation system.

The "dreams" motif is also another clue element of the story (Redford 1970: 89, Westermann 1986: 28). It is repeated in three series of two dreams (37.5-11; 40; 41.14-36), being the last two interpreted by Joseph, and therefore showing his special connection with the divinity, and the first not directly interpreted but being a mystery until it is fulfilled in chapter 42-44. As mentioned before, the dreams motif is not only an element to characterize Joseph's special gift and wisdom, but also a tool used by the author to frame the story. Dreams and wisdom are connected in ancient literature, and this being two connected to Joseph, they have made some authors (Redford 1970: 94 and 96; Westermann 1986: 28) see a connection between this character and the motif "The wise man as saviour". The intervention of Joseph, who has a wisdom that no other in the kingdom has (41.8), gives him this place; in addition, the story tells us, his counsel is the one that allows the people to "survive" the famine, giving Joseph's action a protagonist with a clearly important role in the narrative. In this sense, the story links Joseph with the tradition of Daniel (Daniel 5), who is also an officer in a foreign court and whose intervention unveils secrets to the king that no other magician or wise man could disclose. This characteristic of Joseph has made Von Rad link Genesis 37-50 with Egyptian traditions, especially those related to wisdom (Von Rad 1976: 256). He considers that the wisdom of Amenemope and the lamentation of the Eloquent Peasant could have influenced the story in one way or another (Von Rad 1976: 256). Authors have also seen other sources and connections with ancient literature in Genesis 37-50. Redford (1970: 181) perceives a relationship of this section with Psalm 105 and the traditions of Osiris, while Von Rad (1976: 255) believes that it resembles literary constructions like that of David's Succession Narrative. As it has been described, the Joseph story is full of motifs and traditions from its cultural context, all reconstructed to fit the rhetorical discourse the author wants to transmit.

1.6. Literary role of Genesis 37-50: Socio-economic and ideo-theological elements:

The last part of this first section is focused on describing what has been said about the role of Genesis 37-50 in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects. There are various positions on this, some emphasizing its literary function alone, while others paying more attention to its possible ideo-theological and socio-political interest. Here, I mention some of the arguments that have been made about the role of Genesis 37-50 in these three areas.

One of the questions that researchers have tried to answer is about the role of chapters 37-50 in the book of Genesis. Authors like Coats have argued that this section has the main purpose of functioning as a "theological and structural bridge between the patriarchs and the exodus" (Coats 1976: 55 and 1983: 266. Confirm also with Reimer 1996: 64-65). This movement, Coats believes, is done for the preservation of the family from the danger represented by a famine (Coats 1983: 266). Green agrees with Coats' position, stating that "the main goal of the whole narrative of Genesis 37-50 is to get Jacobs family out of Canaan and surviving" (Green 1998: 150). She considers also that, in this section the idea is to reflect on the experience of survival and on the need to struggle to return to Canaan (Green 1998: 151). Therefore, Genesis 37-50 has been considered a section that allows the story of the patriarchs' continuance to the Exodus, and the Exodus to have roots in the ancient "fathers and mothers" of Israel.

Von Rad (1976), dealing with the function of this section in the Old Testament tradition as a whole, has suggested another way to see the role of Genesis 37-50. He maintains that the message in this section can be understood almost at the end, in verse 50:20, where the interrelationships between the human action and divine providence is highlighted (Von Rad 1976: 259). According to this author, the message of the story is that even though no one can suspect it God has everything under control (Von Rad 1976: 259 and Rad 1976: 261). Reimer in certain way expands Von Rad's idea here, saying that the same verse of Genesis 50.20 sends the theological and sapiential teaching that "God turns evil into good" (Reimer 1996: 64). Going back to Von Rad, he considers strongly that Genesis 37-50 has nothing to do with socio-political or cultural interests, and that instead it is an account concerned about wisdom.

Others have considered the interest in wisdom that this story seems to contain. Coats (1983: 266), for example, dealing with Genesis 37-50 individually, proposes that the story presents "a wise administrator as a man whose characteristics can edify future generations". Joseph here becomes the "hero" of the story, not only being an "accepted" character in the eyes of the audience but also a model to follow. The intention of the narrative is strongly linked with Joseph's characterization, as Coats explains, saying that the author:

> "…depicts the ideal power figure whose characteristics enable him to execute his office with discretion and wisdom…the focus demonstrates proper use of power within the office. Joseph stands as an administrator whose work exemplifies wisdom and perception as virtues that should be characteristic for any administrator. The story as legend would thus edify the members of the institution which it derives." (Coats 1983: 284)

These words are important to consider. Even though they can have connections with Von Rad's proposal in terms of wisdom, it is clear that administration and formation could be part of the interests of the story, a preoccupation that derives from the ambit of the court, and therefore showing its political and ideo-theological interests. According to Coats (1983: 94), the story wants to demonstrate that "political power used without wisdom and discretion can be destructive" and a "source of continuing alienation". However, he considers that the message does not finish there, arguing that it also includes that power, used with wisdom and discretion, "can provide blessing for all subjects" (Coats 1983: 94). As it is, the story can suggest that Joseph and his actions need to be accepted, since they come from wisdom and discretion and therefore guarantee a good administration. Anyone being evoked in Joseph as a character would be legitimized under this discourse. Political action with wisdom is accepted and promoted, but the question that needs to be asked here is about the political action and the type of wisdom. In addition, this also has implications for the theological dimension, because what comes from this specific circle that Joseph represents is considered a blessing.

Storniollo also sees a link between wisdom, administration and formation in Genesis 37-50. He considers that prudence and honesty are two characteristics expected from those who are court functionaries, and that Genesis 37-50 is one of the stories typically used to promote these behaviours since it would be used in the formation of those courtiers who will serve the king (Storniollo 1996: 188). His arguments confirm that the so-called Joseph story had ideo-theological purposes. Joseph's portrayal is not only to legitimate the rule of those who govern by showing this character "positively" through picturing him wise and prudent, but also that Genesis 37-50 is a document that, besides, has the interest to prepare high-class youngsters to serve the king with loyalty.

The arguments have shown a movement from the merely literary and theological to more ideological and political aspects. Westermann perceived this in the connection between the familiar and political life that the story presents, concluding that the Genesis 37-50 shows the discussion in Israel around the question of if one brother could rule over the rest (Westermann 1986: 24). This author thinks that the story reflects the moment in the history of Israel when the transition between the patriarchal and the monarchical modes of living was occurring (Westermann 1986: 24). This transition would have been accompanied by the question in Genesis 37.8 about one brother ruling the others, being very

clear that one line of thought in Israel strongly rejected this (Westermann 1986: 24). Westermann reaches the point to give the story a more ideological perspective. Although he mentions that it could have originated in a moment of transition in terms of the social organization in Israel, he does not say much about from which perspective the story could have been constructed (in support or against such transition). For that, the work of Ivo Storniollo, Haroldo Reimer and Robert Coote will have to be considered, since they provide with more arguments to understand the possible rhetorical interests within the narrative including the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects they portray.

Reimer begins talking about Genesis 37-50 acknowledging that any story is free (Storniollo 1996: 187), and that therefore this novella has explicit goals and intentions (Reimer 1996: 64). However, the author recognizes that due to the long process of composition of this section, it shows different emphasis and perspectives that reflect the diverse socio-historical contexts and points of view that participated in its formation (Reimer 1996: 64). This aspect will be understood some pages later, when we discuss how the same story has been understood as political propaganda used by two different and antagonistic circles of power.

Storniollo recognizes the complexity of the Joseph story in its ideological and theological purposes, and he thinks that the story is told to soften the issue that what is narrated was difficult to accept by the people (Storniollo 1996: 187). This author is one of those who believes that the story has the interests of legitimizing a change in the economic system of ancient Israel (Storniollo 1996: 187). He thinks that the story of Joseph is sustained by a carefully constructed ideology to support not only the tributary system, but also to make the people believe that Yahweh, the God of the peasants' revolt, is now blessing such oppressive organization (Storniollo 1996: 187). Reading with this lense allows him to see in the emotional sections of the story a strategy to distract the audience in order to make them "accept" an ideology that turns upside down the political and economic situation of Israel (Storniollo 1996: 187). Reimer (1996: 66), supports the same thesis that Storniollo states, following the work of Frank Crusemann, that Genesis 37-50, using diverse theological and ideological instruments, has the purpose to defend the idea that "the state, its officers, and its policy of tribute and grain storage, are necessary to save the life of the people" (Genesis 50.20), (Reimer 1996: 67). If we take this into account, Genesis 37-50 is now more than a bridge between the patriarchs and the Exodus, an example of wisdom and a treatise to train those that will serve in the court, or a theological document that teaches about God's mystery and sovereignty over human life. It becomes an apology not only for the monarchy, but also for the socio-economic projects it was undergoing, with ideological and theological transformations that were contrary to the traditional beliefs of the Israelites.

In the same line that Reimer has pointed out, Storniollo sees in Genesis 37-50 the urgency to present the tributary system saving the people (Storniollo 1996: 189). For the author, the rhetorical discourse is clear in the insistence that the people believe that they are being saved by this system (Storniollo 1996: 189). This aspect of the Joseph story and Genesis 37-50 is one of the most interesting ones, since the intention of those who wrote the story as it is written would have been to dominate the lives of the population by dominating their perception of the reality. Both Reimer and Storniollo agree, as I describe later, that such rhetorical construction would respond to the interest of the Davidic-Solomonic court in the tenth century BCE (Storniollo 1996: 187; Reimer 1996: 66)[68].

In all this theological discourse that is being constructed around the monarchy and its tributary system, Genesis 45.5 plays a central role, where Joseph states that it was not his brothers but God who sent him to Egypt (Storniollo 1996: 189). This section, Storniollo thinks, presents the idea that God brings back to Israel the tributary system (Storniollo 1996: 189). God changes position, and instead of representing the struggles for justice that are evident in the Exodus and that were part of the origins of the ancient Israelites, he is "stolen" by the court and its scribes and positioned in a way that support the rulers and their oppressive systems. Storniollo (1996: 189) describes this as saying that the author of the story of Joseph makes Yahweh change his position, being no more the God of the egalitarian system and instead blessing the tributary system of the empires. The end of the story is another example of this rhetorical discourse. Storniollo (1996: 190) sees a close connection between Genesis 50.20 and 45.5, where 50.20 reinforces what 45.5 already proposed in terms of the ideological change looked for by those who composed the story: what has happened has been divine intervention in order to save the people.

The story closes with this "teaching", and therefore the last thing the audience hears is that David and Solomon, and all the system they represent, rule due to God's will. Storniollo emphasizes that Genesis 37-50 is a reflection from the context of Solomon's kingship. The story finishes with a reflection of evil and good actions, the evil being what the brothers did against Joseph, and by implication against the tributary system. The good becomes what God did with Joseph, who in this respect will evoke King Solomon (Storniollo 1996: 190). This end will ensure that people think twice before resisting the monarchy and its projects. This effect seems to have had partial success, as the account about Jeroboam's revolt tells.

Storniollo's and Reimer's studies contribute with three very useful elements. First of all, they help to consider Genesis 37-50 as part of a Davidic-Solomonic apology, and therefore as a rhetorical

[68] In Chapter Three I discuss the characteristics of the united monarchy and to what extent it could have fit in the descriptions of Storniollo, Reimer and others.

document that has the intention to promote the kingship of these monarchs. Secondly, the story defends and encourages the acceptance of a socio-economic shift within Israel; it seems to promote the tributary system widely practiced in Canaanite cities and Egypt, rejecting the egalitarian system of the ancient Israelite tribes. Finally, it represents the official religion of the court, where the Yahweh of the liberation and justice is transformed into the god of the king and of its hierarchic and private temple religion; Yahweh continues bringing salvation, but not through a just socio-economic society, but through a system that benefits those who rule. These are basically the ideas that Storniollo and Reimer see in the story, which seem to interestingly relate to what is narrated in Genesis 47.13-26. The question, then, is in what sense what is proposed there is echoed or rejected by Genesis 47.13-26

Robert Coote assumes also a position of understanding Genesis 37-50 as a political propaganda in defence of a specific monarchy with socio-economic and ideo-political interests. However, instead of placing it in David and Solomon's court, Coote considers that this composition is a reflection of the monarchy that emerged in the Northern tribes with Jeroboam as head (Coote 1991: 3). Even though this proposal follows what Reimer and Storniollo saw about the legitimating function of the account, the interesting issue here is that for Coote it would work for the defence of the "political" enemy of these two authors that they propose.

Coote maintains that the current Joseph story is the result of an expansive work of the Elohist theologians on the work of the Yahwistic history, with the purpose to legitimate the revolution of the house of Jeroboam against the one of David in the tenth century BCE (Coote 1991: 3, 5). He recognized that Genesis 37-50 has been understood as a prophetic account related to criticism of the evil actions of the state, specially under the rule of Jeroboam in the tenth century BCE, the Omrids in the ninth, and the elites denounced by Amos and Hosea in the eighth (Coote 1991: 12-13). However, he has chosen the approach to see this document as political propaganda for the beginning of the kinship of the Northern tribe. The author considers that this JE work "reflected the new ruler's claim to legality and continuity" and therefore gave Jeroboam "the right to supplant the house of David" (Coote 1991: 2). In this argument, therefore, can be perceived the understanding of Genesis 37-50 as a political propaganda to legitimate the ruling of a king, as it happened with the arguments that gave the composition to the Davidic-Solomonic court. Even though these two projects, the Judahite and the Israelite, are antagonistic, their political and socio-economic interests would not be that different from their use of religion to strengthen their power.

Coote (1991: 92) uses verses 45.7 and 50.20 to construct his thesis on Jeroboam's connection with Joseph, as Reimer and Storniollo did to connect the same character with Solomon. He states that "Joseph, in Jeroboam's likeness, is God's favourite, through whom God's providence is fulfilled" (Coote

1991: 92). The ideo-theology of the state is again present in the construction of reality with the main purpose to legitimate religiously the regime that is in power. Coote (1991: 92) finds in the Joseph story the intention to "stress God's providence in the revival of the tribes of Joseph under Egyptian auspices", given that as I said before, the pharaoh would be behind the rise of Jeroboam and his claim to kingship. The question that is made at the beginning of the whole section, when in 38.7 the brothers enquire of Joseph about his intention of being *melek* over them, would "reflect the questions that the chiefs and magnates of Israel are asking Jeroboam after they have just finally thrown off the joke of Rehoboam" (Coote 1991: 92).

These questions show the preoccupation of the people, especially those with power threatened by the king. Their question is responded to throughout the events of the story, but specifically in 45.5 and 50.20. Here, with the phrases "It wasn't you who sent me here, but God" and "God has made me lord of all Egypt", the author of the story by implication affirms that "there cannot be doubt that such a God has the sovereignty to make Jeroboam Lord over all Israel" (Coote 1991: 93). Jeroboam's right comes from the heavens, not from any human will, and is what the story tries to make the people of Israel assimilate. That is how Coote understands the unstated response to the question "Are you planning to rule as king over us?" According to this author, the intended response would be "No…in effect, God is planning to make me rule as king over you" (Coote 1991: 93). The ideo-theological legitimation is very strong here, probably responding to the resistance of the people and the menace that represented the Davidic house. However, the Elohist would also make sure to present Joseph, and therefore Jeroboam, as a saviour, making sure that his kingship would be accepted in an easier way. For Coote (1991: 94) there is no doubt that Joseph as portrayed in the story, evokes Jeroboam, man who has been "God's instrument to save the lives of Israel's tribes from the ravages of the house of David". The implications of the socio-economic project of Jeroboam are discussed in Chapter Three, but they do not really seem to differ greatly from those of Solomon and the Davidic house. This would imply that the question here is if the story belongs to Solomon's or Jeroboam's court and not about two different socio-economic projects in a struggle. Coote provides interesting insights for the role of Genesis 47.13-26, opening the possibility to see this story function in more than one specific reality.

This first section has focused on describing the literary dimensions of Genesis 37-50. It has shown the discussions around the content of this account, the difficulty with calling it the Joseph story and the proposals to see it as episodes around the family of Jacob that at certain moments tend to centralize on Joseph's experience. In addition, the main literary sources used in the account are mentioned, giving priority to the characters and the motifs and Joseph's portrayal in both. Finally, the different arguments have been put together around the role of Genesis 37-50 in its literary context and

also as a discourse. The narrative has been considered not only as a bridge between the patriarchs and the Exodus, but also as a writing with a propagandist interest, especially to defend the idea that the monarchy and the tributary system are God's instruments to save the population. Now the discussion moves on to the possible socio-economic contexts that could be reflected in the literary dimensions of the story.

2. Socio-historic aspects of Genesis 37-50

The purpose of this section is to discuss the possible socio-historic context that could have been behind the literary dimensions of Genesis 37-50. The question for the socio-economic, political, and theological world(s) that produced the text, the groups involved in it, and the struggles and conflicts they were facing, are of main interest here. Therefore, I begin by describing what has been generally said about the history of the composition of the story, its process and different editing moments, then move on to talk about the thesis concerning authorship, place and time of composition, to picture the possible context where the story was written and the influences on its production. Finally, a description is provided of the possible socio-economic and ideo-theological ideas that match these contexts linked to the production of the text.

2.1 Process of composition

The apparent homogeneity of the Genesis 37-50 literary dimension has made many authors consider this account as the product of one writer in a sole moment of composition. However, little by little, researchers started finding certain incongruities that allowed them to see in Genesis 37-50 a more complex process of development. Since this process demonstrates that there were different hands at different times and with different interests in the production of the stories in Genesis 37-50, the purpose here will be to discuss some elements of this process in order to make sense of the different ideas and intentions we perceive when reading this section.

Von Rad (1961) recognizes certain ambiguity in the composition of the story when he tries to make sense of the material in Genesis 37-50. Although he recognizes that the Joseph story could have developed from a simpler form, he also maintains that the it is "from the beginning to an end an organically constructed narrative", adding that "no single element of it can have existed independently as a separate element of tradition" (Von Rad 1961 347-348). Two ideas seem to combine here. First, the perception that the story is not the result of the combination of different sources, as others will argue, and secondly, that it demonstrates having been through a process of composition. Even though we recognize that there is material that seems to come from the same origin such as 39-45 (See

Westermann 1986), taking into account all the sections of Genesis 37-50 makes readers acknowledge that the work is the result of a complex process of development.

Coats proposes something similar to Von Rad, and considers that the Joseph story (for him, composed by 37.1 to 47.27) seems to be from one source that was related to Yahwist (Coats 1983: 264-265). He assumes this because he finds in the Joseph story what he calls a "uniformity in structure" that makes him conclude that the text is the "creation of a single hand rather than of various stages of production in oral transmission" (Coats 1983: 265). Coats thinks that the Joseph story demonstrates the result of different sources put together by one author instead of the result of earlier stages of growth (Coats 1983: 265). In spite of this, he recognizes that within the section he has selected as the "Joseph story" there are traces of different traditions, as in chapter 41.45-46 and 46.1-6 and 8-27, which would reflect the priestly redaction of this story (Coats 1983: 264). This is one way to see the complexity of the production of the text even in its most "homogeneous" sections. If things are as Coats proposes, then the story should have, in theory, one line of thinking and one sole rhetorical discourse, or at least a main idea that is being transmitted to the audience. This is relevant in a discussion about the rhetorical discourse of the story. Coats' proposal, however, would not match ideas as those promoted by Coote (1991), who sees in Genesis 37-50 a growing process of composition that reflects different strands of work on the same material.

Von Rad's and Coats' arguments see in one part of Genesis 37-50, specially the beginning, one line of thinking due to the homogeneity this section seems to portray. Other authors, however, recognize that in Genesis 37-50 clearly reflected is a process where many hands have been successively involved (Skinner 1930: 440; Redford 1970: 105; Coote 1991: 3). Skinner (1930: 440), for example, maintains that the Joseph story "must have passed through many successive hands before it reached its present perfection of form". He acknowledged the complex production of this text and therefore contributed to see in it the possibility of many voices interacting with one another. Redford (1970: 105) is more ambiguous about his position, saying that the Joseph story could have passed through the hand of one or several authors. He leaves open the possibility to see both options in the composition of the story, showing the difficulty of defining it or closing it by assuming only one perspective. Coote considers that the work behind traditions as that of Genesis 37-60 is the product of a working and reworking of the same material, proposing that it saw the editorial hands of the J, E and P traditions (Coote 1991: 1). He considers that they modified the previous one, so for example in terms of the Joseph story the material was originally composed by J but then edited by E (Coote 1991: 3), showing the interest of a different group and context.

Westermann considers that the Joseph story is composed by Genesis 39-45 and maintains that this section is the result of the work of one author and not the product of a process of composition (Westermann 1986: 26). He argues that the Joseph story "is the fruit…of a literary plan of an artist who conceived it in its written form" (Westermann 1986: 26), supporting the idea that it was not based on previous works but created without a text base. Coats (1983: 283) sees that Genesis 39-41 could have been created as an independent story before its incorporation to the Jacob account, agreeing with Westermann and again showing how hard it is to trace the history of production of Genesis 37-50. However, it is clear that no matter its homogeneity, Genesis 37-50 was not written at once, but underwent a long and complicated process of composition.

The stories about Joseph do not seem to have been the base for the creation of the rest of material in Genesis 37-50. Authors believe that it could have originated independently and then been added to the traditions about Jacob (Redford 1970; Coats 1976 and 1983; Westermann 1986). According to Redford, "the novelette about Jacob's youngest son…was incorporated to en bloc but with minor alteration" at some point in the compilation of Genesis (Redford 1970: 1). Genesis 37-50 is then a later addition that could also have functioned differently before being placed in its current position. Coats (1976: 11) sees the Joseph story framed by verses 37.1 and 47.27a, which are the limits that connect it with the larger context of traditions about Jacob. Westermann argues something similar to Coats, seeing the Joseph story as an "insertion to the Jacob story that…arose independently and was…artistically interwoven with it in chapters 37 and 46-47" (Westermann 1986: 23). For this author, the Joseph story is clearly an insertion placed in the conclusion of the Joseph story (Westermann 1986: 27-28).

The inclusions mentioned before could also have been made at different moments in the processes of composition, specially related to J, E and P. Gunkel (1964: 143) maintains that Genesis 37-50 is the result of material taken from J and E resources, which later were put together by an editor that worked before the compilation done by P. This would sustain what has been said about a long journey for the conformation of the Joseph story. Since J, E and P are accounts dated in different times and places, their participation in the production of this section will imply a complex process of composition. Coats (1983) sees that one of the strands in the process of construction of Genesis 37-50 belongs to J. He recognizes (Coats 1983: 264-265) also the presence of J, E and P in the Joseph story, saying that J would be the central work and that E and P would be additions to the literary piece. Westermann also perceives the different traditions of composition behind Genesis 37-50, seeing P's influence in chapters 46-50 and also in the framework of 37.1-2 and 50.12-14 (Westermann 1986: 23).

The different compositions used a diversity of material, such as biographical records (Skinner 1930: 440), tribal elements (Skinner 1930: 440; Westermann 1986: 23), patriarchal traditions (Westermann 1986: 26), stories about relationships (Skinner 1930: 440), and wisdom accounts (Redford 1970: 105). According to Redford (1970: 178), "the earliest version of the Biblical Joseph story that can be detected is that in which the role of the helpful brother is filled by Reuben alone, and in which the father is called Jacob", and was formed by chapters 37, 40, 41, 42, and 45. This original story in Genesis 37-50 narrated "the coming of Jacob and his family to Egypt, in a rather brief fashion, and concluded with some such statement as that in 47.12" (Redford 1970: 178). Chapters like 38 and 49 would be additions to this section, more connected to the Jacob story (Westermann 1986: 22) and are part of the inclusions that were inserted that made this section grow in content.

With this brief description, it is clear that Genesis 37-50 can be described not only as a good example of the complex process of composition of the Bible, but also as a text that shows the diverse voices that are usually in conflict in its pages. These aspects are useful to understand the authorship, time and place of composition, since comprehending that the section underwent a long process of production will help to make sense of the different material it contains and the different contexts reflected in it.

2.2. Authorship, place and date of composition

The process of composition shows that discussing the authorship, place and time of production of Genesis 37-50 is not an easy task. Many contexts are reflected in the events told in this narrative, consisting of diverse groups of authors with different interests, writing in diverse places and times. A variety of realities could have influenced the discourses of the text, so here considered are those related to the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy (Von Rad 1976; Westermann 1986; Storniollo 1996; Reimer 1996), Jeroboam's monarchy (Coote 1991), the seventh century period (Redford 1970), and the Persian Period (Brett 2000).

2.2.1 The Yahwist and the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy: The earlier period that has been linked with Genesis 37-50 is the one of the beginning of the United Monarchy, centred in the courts of David and Solomon. Von Rad (1976) is one of those who think that this section of Genesis reflects the beginning of the monarchy. This author, who considers that the story of Joseph is strongly constructed around the elements of ancient wisdom, maintains that it is closely related to the monarchic period (Von Rad 1976: 256). He defends his position by arguing that the Solomonic time was characterized by an intellectual revolution, a type of illustration that is clearly part of the story about Joseph (Von Rad 1976: 256). Von Rad, therefore, traces Genesis 37-50, or at least the sections about Joseph, as being part of

the Solomonic court, basing his arguments in the relationship he finds between Egyptian ancient wisdom and the content of the story, and seeing it as a document used in the court to educate the new officers of the king (Von Rad 1976: 256-257). This is the same position of George Coats, who argues that the setting of the story could be related to "the wisdom schools of the royal court" (Coats 1983: 283). Von Rad's ideas imply that the story would have been written by scribes working for the monarch and therefore representing his interests, being placed in Judah and at the end of the tenth century BCE.

Westermann (1986) also defends a thesis similar to Von Rad, seeing Genesis 37-50 as a production that evokes the situations lived in the time of the united kingdom of David and Solomon. However, this author points out more political aspects in the construction of his thesis. Westermann considers that the discussions in the double construction of Genesis 39-41 and 42-45 correspond to two different and contrasting life-styles and the dynamics of relation between them, namely the familiar and the monarchic, (Westermann 1986: 24). Westermann thinks that the literary dimension of the texts allows the audience to perceive "two paths that the history of Israel has followed, that of the patriarchal period and that of the beginning of the monarchy" (Westermann 1986: 24). He points out that the text reflects exactly on the moment of transition, which in his consideration raised the question around one brother ruling over the others (Westermann 1986: 24; Confirm Genesis 37.8). Westermann thinks that the question of one governing the rest is the main line of thinking that lies behind the Joseph story (for him 39-45), and sees in the story voices of contestation stating that "one line of thought in Israel, critical of the monarchy, passionately denied this" (Westermann 1986: 24).

Utilizing this element of the question about rule over others, plus the issue that the narrative was still used to deal with difficult questions as a "predominant…form of tradition", Westermann proposes that "it is more likely that the story had its origins in the period of David and Solomon than in the 6th or 5th centuries"(Westermann 1986: 25). To defend his argument, he also mentions elements like the usage of Egypt as part of the story's setting, stating that this corresponds to the period of Solomon, "when the young Israelite monarchy had friendly relations with the Egyptian court, and there were a brisk of cultural exchange between them" (Westermann 1986: 29). The author, therefore, points out that the main question around the Joseph story would be that of political power, and the context where it came from was the time of David and Solomon's monarchy. It is very interesting that he acknowledges some contestation around the issue of "one ruling over the rest", but his position is not very clear if he considers that the story promotes the monarchy and its centralized power or actually questions such pretensions. However, due to the denouement of the story, it can be assumed that it is understood as promoting the position of the monarchy.

Westermann not only uses the element of the question to place the context of origin of this section, but also other literary elements. For example, he takes the passages in Genesis 43.32 and 46.34 which talk about the restrain of the Egyptians in sharing the table with Hebrews, and uses them to say that such behaviour or attitude would fit properly in the time of Solomon but would be impossible for times in the Persian period (Westermann 1986: 29). Besides, he explains that the usage of Egypt in the story would come from the amazement that this land induced in the author of the story (Westermann 1986: 30), answering also the aspect of authorship and point of view. Such interest in the Egyptian court, proposes Westermann, is centred in the Pharaoh and its institutions (Westermann 1986: 29). That would be the reason why the story gives important place to elements such as "Pharaoh's officers, their titles, investiture with robe, ring and chain, court ceremonial…priests, chief administrators", and others (Westermann 1986: 29). This author, therefore, maintains that the Joseph story comes from the Solomonic court, responding to the situation of the beginning of the monarchy and the questions it generated about the legitimacy that one brother ruled over the others.

Ivo Storniollo (1996) is another author who sees the Joseph story as a product of the United Monarchy. This author reads Genesis 37-50 from the perspective of a socio-economic conflict in ancient Israel, the problem that arose due to the transition from an egalitarian to a tributary society (Storniollo 1996: 187). The author proposes that this system is inaugurated by Saul, amplified by David, and consolidated by Solomon (Storniollo 1996: 187), and therefore, maintains that this economic shift is supported in the account about Joseph and must be understood as part of the context of Solomon's temple-state system. Agreeing with Von Rad, Storniollo (1996: 188) also sees in this story a document used to prepare the officers of the king, an element that allows him again to make the connection between the story and the monarchic period. Other literary elements contribute also to the construction of this argument. Storniollo thinks that Solomon's dreams and wisdom are strongly connected to Joseph's description in the story (Storniollo 1996: 188) that becomes again another way to relate the text with the context of the United Monarchy and specifically with the period of Solomon.

The presence of Egypt is also used by Storniollo, as it was by Westermann, to date Genesis 37-50. First, he sees in the discourse of salvation in Genesis 37-50 (45.5 and 50.20 specifically) the same apologetic programme sustained by Israel and Egypt in the time of the rising of the kingship (Storniollo 1996: 189). Besides, he considers the fact that Joseph marries an Egyptian in Genesis 41.45 evokes Solomon's alliance with Egypt, his marriage with an Egyptian princess, the assumption of its culture, and the commitment to apply its socio-economic model (Storniollo 1996: 189). This description by Storniollo provides elements to define his position about authorship, place and time of composition, which would all be around the Solomonic court in Judah in the second part of the tenth

century BCE. He thinks that stories like Genesis 42-44, which for some authors corresponds to one of the central parts of Genesis 37-50 (See Westermann 1986), would have circulated around in the time of Solomon, clearly representing the interests of the court to promote the acceptance of the tributary system among the tribes (Storniollo 1996: 189). This also implies that the production of the story was in the context of the court and through the work of the royal scribes. Storniollo considers that to find the authors of the story it is needed only to perceive the ideological discourse it portrays (Storniollo 1996: 189).

Storniollo argues that the story represents Yahweh "changing from side", in other words, blessing the tributary system of the empire instead of the egalitarian organization of the tribes (Storniollo 1996: 189). This aspect would evoke again the time of Solomon and his temple, where the scribes of the king would have changed Yahweh's position to favour the king's political and economic enterprise (Storniollo 1996: 189). For Storniollo, the issue that Yahweh does not anymore represent the divinity that rejects the tributary system is a signal of the context of the Solomonic monarchy (Storniollo 1996: 190). His position, and those of Von Rad and Westermann, allow readers to identify a context in the account of Genesis 37-50, seeing the text as a production of the scribes of the United Monarchy based in Judah in the second period of the tenth century.

Reimer (1996) is the last author here mentioned who believes that the story reflects the context of the tenth century BCE. This author, following the thesis of Crusemann, also considers that the Joseph story is the product of the beginning of the monarchy in Israel, specifically in the times of Davidic and Solomonic kingship (Reimer 1996: 66). As Westermann (1986) does, Reimer points out that one of the elements placing the Joseph story in the context of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy is the question in Genesis 37.8 about one brother ruling over the others (Reimer 1996: 67). He thinks that this question responded to a basic conflict of the time, where two groups were caught between the continuation of the non-centralized egalitarian society and the establishment of the institution of the monarchy. Besides, Reimer also sees in the insistence to show that Yahweh was with Joseph (39.2s, 5, 21, 23) the situation where the kingship rose, when its supporters insisted on the divine support for this institution (Reimer 1996: 68). The author considers that there is a close resemblance between 1 Samuel 16.13 that says that "Yahweh was with David", and the texts about Joseph's divine support (Reimer 1996: 68), making a connection between the story of Jacob's son and the context of the rise of the United Monarchy through the religious support that both character's enjoyed. Aspects related to the dreams (Genesis 40.9-19 and 1 Kings 3) and the cities to store grain (Genesis 41 and 1 Kings 9.19) are also used by Reimer to connect the story with the context of Solomon's rule (Reimer 1996: 69-70). These arguments, together with the others mentioned above, are elements that strongly allow the

thought that Genesis 37-50 could have had some sections originated from the context of the United Monarchy, written in the court and by the hands of the royal scribes.

If the period of the United Monarchy is considered, then the possibility that the Yahwistic school influenced Genesis 37-50 becomes high, this if the resources from the documentary hypothesis are taken into account. Authors like Speiser (1964), Von Rad (1961) and Van Seters (1999) consider that the Joseph story belongs to this theological school. Speiser sees J, E and P influencing the section of Genesis 37-50, and he considers that it is in the so called "Joseph story" J reaches its greatest heights, especially in chapter 46 as the climax of the narrative (Speiser 1964: XVII-XVIII). Von Rad (1961: 348) considers that the Joseph story is composed by the J and E traditions, while Van Seters (1999: 139) sees in this account the influence of what he calls pre-J and J. Although J has been traditionally dated around the tenth century B.C.E. in the courts of David and Solomon (Clevenot 1985: 21; Briend 1980: 4; Ibañez 1999: 10), as I said before in connection to what has been discussed about that period as being the context for Genesis 37-50, other authors think differently.

Van Steers, for example, points out how this tradition has a story of development, ranging from the ninth and eighth centuries to the time of the exile (Van Seters 1999: 135, 139; Confirm also with Ibañez 1999: 10, who mentions the process of growth of J). This aspect complicates the argument around the authorship of the story, since mentioning J as the author would then bring about the question when to date this tradition. However, this is a more realistic perception that acknowledges the long process of composition of most biblical texts. We can conclude that the Yahwist of the tenth century had something to do with Genesis 37-50, and also that both this theological school and literary composition developed through the centuries until the Persian Period.

Even though the authorship of J has been commonly sustained, there are authors that also think that J was not part of the composition of the text. Skinner affirms that "J could not have been the author" of the so called Joseph story, while Redford proposes that due to the time of the account, J and E would belong to an earlier time that will have impeded them to participate in its production (Redford 1970: 252-253). Redford, who dates J and E in the tenth and ninth centuries, sees that it would be impossible that these theological traditions influenced the composition of the Joseph story, a narrative that for him belongs clearly to the seventh century (1970: 242). Westermann (1986: 28) also thinks that J's work is not reflected in the content of the Joseph story, especially in what he considers the centre of it, chapters 39-45. For this author, the Joseph story has only one author, but it cannot be the Yahwist since his method and style are different from J in 12-36.8 (Westermann 1986: 28). Even though Westermann considers that the tenth century is the place of composition of the Joseph story, he is not

convinced that the Yahwist had anything to do with it and therefore leaves open the question about authorship.

The proposal around a possible composition of Genesis 37-50 is attractive, especially because of the socio-economic and ideo-theological elements it could provide if it is understood as a product of the Solomonic court. However, it is necessary to admit that something similar to the "Davidic-Solomonic Empire" has been highly contested, and that then the argument of scribes writing the story in benefit of the Solomonic monarchy cannot be assumed without pointing out the arguments against the existence of such a kingdom[69]. This issue is raised in chapter three.

2.2.2 Jeroboam I and the raising of the Northern kingdom: Authors like Coote propose a different context and authorship for the composition of Genesis 37-50. He considers that it is the Elohist tradition instead of the Yahwistic one that is involved in the production of the text (Coote 1991: 74). According to Coote (1991: 12), the setting of E is "in northern Israel in the monarchic period, between the accession of Jeroboam I (931 BCE) and the fall of Samaria (722 BCE)". With this information, the author is already providing an answer for the question of this section. The authorship of the story would be the Elohist School, placed in the court of Jeroboam I, who reigned from 931 BCE. Coote suggests that the scribes of Jeroboam reworked an original document from J in order to make it fit the interests of the new ruler (Coote 1991: 74). For him, the scribes of Israel turned J's history of Judah and Joseph into one of mainly Joseph (Coote 1991: 74), which explains the content of the account and the apparent connections between Jeroboam and the son of Jacob. If this position is considered, then the story would not have its origin in the court of Solomon and respond to the context of Judah-Israel in the tenth century BCE. However, its composition would have occurred one generation later, in the situation of the divided monarchy and in the land of Israel, written from the perspective of the court founded by Jeroboam I.

Coote (1991: 92) maintains that, in the same way that "J reflected the circumstances of David's coming to power, E reflects the circumstances of Jeroboam coming to power". The narrative would highlight the connection between Joseph and Jeroboam in that Pharaoh brings both to power, saying that the text responds to the time where the Northern tribes gained pre-eminence under Egyptian support (Coote 1991: 92). This approach, therefore, contributes with another look to the context of production of Genesis 37-50, distancing a little from the traditional thinking related to the text as composition of the Solomonic court and highlighting how important was the adaptation done to the narrative by Jeroboam I's court.

[69] See, for example, the work of Israel Finkelstein *The Bible Unearthed* (2001) for an archaeological discussion against the elements attributed to the Solomonic monarchy.

2.2.3. From the seventh century BCE to the Persian period: Donald Redford contributes with insightful arguments to the discussion about the Genesis 37-50 authorship, date and place of composition. This author suggests that the Egyptian elements present in this section are of a late period, maintaining that the account corresponds "in time to the period contemporary to with the late Israelite and Judahite monarchies" (Van Seters 1999: 133). Redford considers that the Egyptian elements of the story can be dated from the seventh century, the earliest, and the fifth century BCE, the latest, suggesting that the Joseph story, by including them, would have been composed around this period (Redford 1970: 242 and 2011: 315). Redford studies different aspects of the story to get to this conclusion. He places Joseph's installation as an action that could only happen in the Egyptian context at the seventh century BCE, and argues that names like Potiphar, Asenath and Zaph'enath-pane'ah belong to the Saite and Persian period, around 664-331 BCE (Redford 1970: 225, 231). In addition, he states that "the accusation of spying…would fit from 700 BCE to 343 BCE, where Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires would try to make Egypt a subject state." (Redford 1970: 233). Redford (2011: 308) argues that the usage of two contrasting women that interact with Joseph (Genesis 40 and 41) is "reflective of the stories of virtuous and immoral women of Heliopolis", Egyptian themes that cannot be found before the sixth century BCE at the earliest. This author also mentions that the word "Pharaoh" as a way to address the king of Egypt belongs to the seventh century time, while the racial exclusiveness in verse 43.32 fit in the Saite and Persian period, when according to the author, "racial tensions were especially strong" (Redford 1970: 233, 235).

This author also uses the silence of early texts about Joseph to maintain his thesis of a late period of composition. Redford claims that "the reason why historical books and the prophets say nothing about the Joseph romance is because the narrative was not yet in existence when they were written" (Redford 1970: 250). He concludes, therefore, that the same "chronological limits assigned to the background of the story, 650-425 BCE", are valid also for the composition of the story (Redford 1970: 250). Redford offers another perspective to make sense of the Joseph story, now in the context of the seventh and sixth century, what would imply a delay also in the composition of Genesis 47.13-26 if the idea is still to understand this passage as a response to the biggest account about Joseph and its ideo-theological and socio-economic projects. If Redford's approach is to be used to contrast the Joseph story as a whole to Genesis 47.13-26, then another context of socio-economic exploitation would have to be explored.

The final context that could have influenced the Genesis 37-50 composition is the one of the Persian period. Mark Brett's proposal is that this time was a moment where the Joseph story suffered an editing work that is reflected in the content of the section (Brett 2000: 5). The author maintains that

the book of Genesis is part of the contestation of some sectors of Judea as a province under the domination of the Persian empire in the fifth century BCE (Brett 2000: 5). He connects this period of time with the story of Joseph using two elements. First of all, he uses the characters to build his argument, saying that Joseph would emulate Ezra since both of them are "native administrators of imperial rule", while he sees in the Pharaoh and his words praising Joseph's wisdom (Genesis 41) as an evocation of Artaxerxes' praises of Ezra's divine wisdom in Ezra 7.25-26 (Brett 2000: 7). In addition, Brett proposes that the claims of providence and divine wisdom to justify administrative actions, specially related to economic matters, would be something that connects the Joseph account with the context of Ezra (Brett 2000: 7). He does not really offer any clear suggestions about who could have been the author of the story, but positions such action away of the official rulers of the time. It seems that Brett considers that was a composition done within Judah, and there is no doubt that this author's chronology for the work is in the fifth century BCE. Brett's work offers not only interesting insights to understand what happens in the Joseph story, but also contributes to the discussion around the complex process of composition of this account and the different contexts where the story can make sense.

The different perspectives about time, place and authorship for the composition of Genesis 37-50 show the difficulty with the biblical texts. For the purpose of this research, they are useful in offering a wide range of possibilities of how the story can function and therefore be interpreted. Since the main goal is to try to perceive the ideo-theological and socio-economic interests behind the text, the next section attempts to describe the ideo-theological and socio-economic interests of each context described here in order to see which makes sense and seems closer to the events narrated in the story.

2.3. Socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects

After studying the main literary elements of Genesis 37-50 and also considering the possible context that could have influenced the composition of the story, the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects that this account could propose are discussed. I begin the section with the main social and economic aspects that the story seems to deal with, to move then to the ideological and theological interests that could have been behind the production of the text.

2.3.1 Socio-economic aspects of Genesis 37-50

Genesis 37-50 appears to be a simple story that narrates the conflict and restoration of peace within the family of Jacob and informs how the Israelites ended up leaving Canaan and settling in Egypt. However, in the middle of these events, social and economic situations arise and become

central elements of the story. Here mentioned are two of them: the social movement from an egalitarian to a hierarchic organization through the establishment of kingship and also the change from an independent socio-economic production to a tributary system.

From egalitarian to monarchic society: One of the main questions that requires a response in Genesis 37-50 concerns the legitimacy of one brother ruling over the others. Westermann, basing his argument on the work of Frank Crusemann (1978), says that "the conflict in the family itself also exhibits a political aspect in the question of whether a brother should lord it over his brothers, the basic conflict of the era in which the Joseph story arose" (Westermann 1986: 21). For this author, the questions raised in Genesis 37.8 make sense to what he considers is time of the production of the Joseph story, the tenth century BCE, arguing that the main question of that time echoes the quoted passage in that both share a concern about one person ruling over others. For Westermann, two styles of life and organization are confronted at this time, so the story allows a view of the confrontation between the "Community organization and the monarchic organization" (Westermann 1986: 38). Coote also sees this debate, but instead of understanding it as part of the rise of the monarchy in Solomon's time, he thinks it reflects the moment where Jeroboam I claimed kingship of the Northern tribes (Coote 1991: 92). Coote maintains that one of the central arguments of the story deals with the question that the tribes' had raised against the monarchy in regards to accepting Jeroboam as legitimate ruler after they had freed from the Davidic house's bondage (Coote 1991: 92). Reimer (1996) also notes that Joseph's pretensions are related to totalitarian power. He suggests how the vocabulary in Genesis 37.8 and 10 is merely political, with "$lm" signifying "to exercise political dominion, specifically through state or monarchic system", and "hwx" conveying the idea of "bowing down before a monarch or priest" (Reimer 1996: 67).

These words contribute to see the switch in power within the community behind the text and the power centred in one person or elite. Reimer agrees with Westermann that the story can be seen as a conflict between groups of people, some that supported the monarchy and others who are the representatives of the tribal system, who would continue defending an egalitarian and non-centralized society (Reimer 1996: 67-68). The intention to organize hierarchically the social relations between the members of the community was not accepted very positively. Westermann (1986: 38) describes how the monarchy was "a social order that stands in opposition to the community order of the family where the only authority is parental". He argues that in the story in 37.7 the brothers understand very clearly Joseph's pretentions to rule as king over them, and that they, presented as a grouped character in the story at that precise moment, are pictured as the representatives of "the old order, which they see threatened by their youngest brother's arrogance" (Westermann 1986: 38). Storniollo (1996: 187)

perceives in Joseph's dreams the intention to change the relations in the community, to become the ruler over the family. For him, therefore, it is also understandable that this change in the situation made the brothers react violently in order to avoid the situation of only one tribe governing over all the tribes that were liberated by Yahweh (Storniollo 1996: 187).

Reimer (1996: 68) highlights this conflict by signalling how the brothers' show of rejection against Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37.18 causes them to "conspire" against him, a word that conveys an intention to hold a military coup against a ruler. Genesis 37-50 not only shows the process of transition from the patriarchal period to the monarchy, but also the contestation that this shift produced (Westermann 1986: 24; Brett 2000: 111). However, the narrator of the story makes sure of telling his audience that the new order comes from God (Storniollo 1996: 189; cf. Genesis 45.5 and 50.20), implying that there is nothing to do but accept it. Coats (1976: 15) sees this aspect very clearly, stating that the crisis in the story will not be resolved until the whole family recognizes Joseph's power. The dreams and the garment in Genesis 37 are tools to show that Joseph has a higher social rank in comparison to his brothers (Westermann 1986: 37; Pirson 2002: 33-34), something that becomes totally true when he is raised to the position of governor of Egypt (Genesis 41-45). The story shows the social conflict that arose due to the emergence of the monarchy and the switch in the dynamics of power in the land. From an egalitarian relationship between the brothers and therefore the Israelite tribes or communities, now, one small group will have pre-eminence over the others. The struggle for power is evident, as is the power of the group that has won it.

From communitarian to tributary system: The change in power relations also meant a change in the socio-economic organization. The story relates about a transition from an egalitarian system that in general terms guaranteed the economic independence of the tribes and clans to a centralized system where the king has the "right" to possess certain amounts of the production and other possessions of the population. Storniollo (1996) is one of the authors who perceived the socio-economic shift that the story seems to defend. According to him, Israel had always debated between two political economic systems: the egalitarian and the tributary (Storniollo 1996: 187). He considers that the egalitarian system in Israel had its origin in a revolt of Canaanite peasants, who, basing their movement in the religion of Yahweh, overthrew the tributary system held by Egypt and the Canaanite cities (Storniollo 1996: 187). This society would have been based on equal access to land and equal participation and rights in political decision-making (Storniollo 1996: 187). It would have functioned as an anti-programme to the tributary system represented by Egypt, the Canaanite city-states and the big empires of the Ancient Near East (Storniollo 1996: 187).

Israel could have lived with this project for about 200 years, until the leadership of the people asked Samuel to reintroduce the tributary system (1 Samuel 8), which began being applied with Samuel, was extended by David and consolidated by Solomon (Storniollo 1996: 187). In Reimer's opinion (1996: 69) the description of the storage policy of Joseph in chapter 41 is a reference to the start of the monarchy and the implementation of the tributary system. This author points out that 1 Samuel 8.11-18, a text known as "the right of the king", would be a story that criticizes the monarchy as something that benefits the king only (Storniollo 1996: 69). In the light of this text, the Joseph story in Genesis 37-50 promotes the idea that such practices were beneficial for everyone and necessary for the survival of the people (Reimer 1996: 69). Storniollo (1996: 189) agrees with this impression, saying that indeed chapter 41 wants its audience to believe that they can be saved by the tributary system. Nevertheless, he also points out that in the story there is an important detail that is not mentioned: the narrator does not explain that the Egyptians are made to buy the food they themselves have produced (Storniollo 1996: 189). This is one of the ambiguities within the narrative which shows the preoccupation to defend the transition of the economic model as a positive action for the people by omitting its negative aspects. Chapter 41 becomes one of the examples that shows this transition in the economic organization, although in this passage the transition is positive, and the people are saved by Joseph's measures. However, 47.13-26, as a story that also narrates events related to the socio-economic realm, is not as positive as the previous ones. Storniollo (1996) thinks that this passage is the best example of the consequences of the tributary system. He argues that the text shows how this system consumed the life of the people, making them slaves without property or freedom (Storniollo 1996: 190).

As Storniollo explains, the new monarchic organization received its income from the peasantry, who paid for the luxuries of the court through taxes and forced labour (Storniollo 1996: 187). This was the change strongly promoted by the story of Joseph and so highly contested by some of its characters and situations. The system would have come from empires such as Egypt, with whom Israel was in contact in the time of King Solomon. Storniollo maintains that Solomon made a politic and cultural alliance with Egypt and therefore adopted its political-economic model, the tributary system (Storniollo 1996: 188). Reimer (1996: 69) states that the storage cities that are mentioned as Joseph's idea in 41.48 resemble 1 Kings 9.19 where this kind of organization is attributed to Solomon. The text of Genesis 37-50, then, would be closely related to a context where socio-economic measures were changing in Israel. Storniollo (1996: 187) claims that the story looks to turn upside-down the socio-economic system of the time. Similar to Storniollo, Reimer maintains that the story represents an

"economic inversion" that defends the transitions of the system by showing its "advantages" and being silent on its negatives consequences (Reimer 1996: 70).

2.3.2 Ideo-theological aspects in Genesis 37-50:

The socio-economic dimensions of Genesis 37-50 previously described have strong connections and also an inter-dependence with the ideo-theological programmes which may be perceived in the story. Even though in terms of socio-economic aspects the story seems to have one main line of thought, the centralized rule of the monarchy with is tributary system, the ideo-theological dimensions of the story appear more diverse and offer a wider range of possibilities. Discussed here are the ideo-theological projects in Genesis 37-50 as: a political propaganda for the monarchy; the theological legitimation of a political-economic institution; and a document of political resistance.

Genesis 37-50 as monarchic propaganda: As said before, Genesis 37-50 has been considered a text that defends the monarchic institution, narrating the transition to this socio-political organization in a positive tone. In light of this view, the literary composition can also be understood as a document interested in monarchic legitimation, opening to question what kind of kingship or rule is being defended or promoted. For authors like Storniollo (1996) and Reimer (1996), the Joseph story constructs an ideo-theological discourse to legitimize the monarchy of the Davidic-Solomonic House. The way to legitimate a system so highly contested, as described before, was to construct the idea that it was necessary for the survival and salvation of the people (Storniollo 1996: 189; Reimer 1996: 67). In the story, all of Egypt, including Jacob's family are threatened by a famine (Genesis 41-45 and 47.13-26). Joseph becomes administrator of Egypt and through economic reforms that evoke the tributary system the story imparts that he "saves the people" (Genesis 41.34-35, 48-57; 45.5 and 50.20). Joseph as a character evokes Solomon, a strategy used by the author of the story to show how this king had special wisdom, administrative skills and divine support to rule the land properly (Storniollo 1996: 188; Reimer 1996: 68). The monarchy and the king, suddenly stop being oppressive and become necessary for the good will of the land. The ideological work of the story is to present what is considered the "positive" impact of the monarchy and its measures, ignoring or being silent, except for Genesis 47.13-26 that is considered an inclusion, about the dangerous effects of the kingship (Reimer 1996: 70). The story suggests that the familiar and tribal system is insufficient to guarantee the safety of the people, and therefore the measures related to the court and its institutions are the new ways needed for that (Reimer 1996: 67). The brothers bow down to Joseph and the dreams of ruling over others come true: what it means is that the monarchy is finally "accepted" in the land of Israel, or at least presented as embraced by the people who at a certain point doubted its consequences. Genesis 37-50, therefore,

becomes a document that legitimizes the monarchy of David and Solomon, a time of transition that was highly contested by the Israelites.

Robert Coote also agrees that Genesis 37-50 is a document that defends the right of a king to rule, but instead of seeing Solomon as the beneficiary of the story, he thinks that the one justified by it is Jeroboam I. According to this author, Genesis 37-50 "was a propaganda in defence of the revolution in late tenth century BCE", when an Elohist author reworked the J document on the Joseph story to promote the rise of the tribe of Jeroboam I (Coote 1991: 3, 5). The author sees evocations of Jeroboam I in Joseph's characterization (Coote 1991: 75, 91), and considers that the story is the work of the first king of Israel's court, which has as main objective of justifying the revolution against the house of David and the raising of the new monarchy in the Northern tribes (Coote 1991: 2). Genesis 37-50 is again understood as a political and ideological document, but different from the positions of Storniollo and Reimer, instead of defending Solomon and his heir's rule, the text claims, according to Coote, Jeroboam's "legality and continuity" to kingship and therefore "the right to supplant the house of David" (Coote 1991: 2). The work looks to portray a positive image of Jeroboam, this by, identifying him with a Joseph that is full of wisdom and supported by the divinity (Coote 1991: 91-91, 94). As was David, Jeroboam I "was an usurper…and took pains to assert the legitimacy of his rule and the jurisdiction of his law" (Coote 1991: 2). The account would have to function not only to strengthen his rule but also to guarantee that his son be seen as the rightful person to inherit the kingship (Coote 1991: 2). Genesis 37-50, then, can be considered the work of a court, either Solomonic or Jeroboamite, interested in the legitimation of the ruling house.

Tributary system as salvific institution: In the same way that the monarchy was legitimized by being presented as salvific and God supported, the socio-economic model of the tributary system was transformed from being oppressive to salvific in Genesis 37-50. This was achieved by a reconstruction of the theological discourse that identified the Israelite tribes who suddenly saw the God that supported the revolution against the monarchy and the tributary system blessing the king and his socio-economic measures. That God was with Joseph in Genesis 37-50, gives the impression that the divinity sanctions all that the "hero" of the story does. Joseph's success is attributed to God, and therefore his actions related to centralized power and economic extraction are put as being guided by the divine wisdom the character has. The story then sustains that Yahweh has had a change of mind. Even though this God represented the struggle against the oppression of the Canaanite city-states with their centralized power and exploitative socio-economic measures, now it has become part of the official religion of the state and its king. The monarchy and the tributary system become a divine tool to save the people (Reimer 1996: 69). This is the impression that Storniollo has from reading Genesis 37-50, saying that

this story has a carefully constructed ideology that shows that Yahweh, the God of the peasants' revolt, is now blessing the tributary system. He considers that the centre of this message is in chapter 45, where Joseph tells to his brothers that it was not them but God who took him to Egypt because the divinity wanted the tributary system reinstated (Storniollo 1996: 189).

The tributary system could not work well without a religious system that sanctioned it, so the temple was needed to fulfil this rule and give full legitimacy to its measures. David makes a first attempt to have the temple, however, the only thing he can do is to move the ark of the tribes to Jerusalem (Reimer 1996: 70), which was a first move in the intentions of the monarchy of using religion to sustain their rule. It is Solomon who then establishes the temple in the time of his rule, and with this he is able to make the theological change that positioned Yahweh in favour of the tributary system (Storniollo 1996: 189; Reimer 1996: 70). The story of Joseph is an example of this switch, since it pictures Egypt, archetype of exploitative and oppressive organization through the tributary system, as a place where life is preserved (Storniollo 1996: 189). In terms of the ideological discourse of the story, for Storniollo it is clear that Solomon's scribes achieved the difficult task of making Yahweh appear as supportive of the unjust system sustained by the monarchy (Storniollo 1996: 189). The brothers intended to do evil by opposing God's will, but in the end God turned this evil into good through Joseph's rise to power and the application of his system (Storniollo 1996: 190). Yahweh becomes the "architect" of the monarchy (Reimer 1996: 69-70). This seems to be the main theological purpose of Genesis 37-50. Storniollo considers it as a manipulation of religion in order to make Yahweh support programmes that are totally contrary to his projects (Storniollo 1996: 190). The story, then, was intended to show the audience that Yahweh was with the institution of the monarchy and therefore blessed all its measures, especially the tributary system.

Genesis 37-50 as text of resistance: Even though the arguments mentioned before highlight that Genesis 37-50 was part of the legitimating discourse of the rulers, some authors have also suggested that the story could also have in its agenda the role to resist the political and theological power of those in command. Even though Coote supports the idea that the story is interested in justifying Jeroboam I's rule in Israel, he also acknowledges that there have been arguments that see in the text voices of resistance (Coote 1991: 12). According to this author, the E tradition, which he considers the one that expands the Yahwistic version of the Joseph story, has been understood as a "quasi-prophetic document that criticises the excessive evils of the state" (Coote 1991: 12). Such criticism would have been against "Jeroboam in the tenth century, Omrid kings in the ninth, the elite condemned by Amos and Hosea in the eighth, or some other" (Coote 1991: 12-13). Even though Coote (1991: 12) considers the arguments in favour of resistance as "improbable", the opinions become very important to

understand in one way the ambiguous representation of Joseph, which is not consistently positive throughout Genesis 37-50. In addition, it gives light to understand specifically Genesis 47.13-26, which seems to have a tone that challenges the circles of power and therefore could have belonged to the resisting groups that Coote mentions.

The other approach that sees projects of resistance in Genesis 37-50 is the one of Mark Brett. This author considers that the book of Genesis "is shaped by contestation" since "its numerous narratives explicitly and implicitly question the political authorities of the day" (Brett 2000: 4). Dating the final editing of the book in the fifth century BCE, Brett considers it played a role resisting the politics of the Persian Empire (Brett 2000: 4). The author thinks that there is an analogy between Joseph and Ezra, putting both characters as suspicious due to their claims of having divine wisdom and access to providence while expropriating property (Brett 2000: 7). For Brett (2000: 7), there is a "covert polemic against Persia" by using Egypt as the setting for Genesis 37-50. This because even though such a place was Persia's enemy in the first century and a negative portrayal would have served the purposes of the empire, in the story Egypt would be in fact a cypher for Persia, used to criticize the rule represented by Ezra (Brett 2000: 7). The author provides an interesting reading of the story, the characters and the plot, and therefore is able to see the ambiguities of the narrative and also the possible attitude of the population, not very happy with the rule that was imposed on them.

The socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects of Genesis 37-50 have been usually connected to the circles of power. They have been understood as discourses that legitimize the monarchy and its economic system and also reconstruct the social organization of the people and change its theological world. Now that these ideas have been described, the next step in this work is to discuss the place that Genesis 47.13-26 has in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects within the literary composition of Genesis 37-50.

3. Genesis 47.13-26 and its role in Genesis 37-50:

Having described the main literary and socio-historic aspects of Genesis 37-50 and discussed its possible ideo-theological and socio-economic projects, it is necessary to compare the probable rhetorical discourse of this literary work with the one found in Genesis 47.13-26. The purpose of the comparison is to establish the role of Genesis 47.13-26 in its literary context, specially to see if the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects are in harmony with those in Genesis 37-50; or if they are in opposition. To do this I divide the section into four features. Highlighted first are some literary connections and disconnections between the two texts. Secondly, the two socio-historic contexts where the stories could have been composed are discussed, then their main ideo-theological and socio-

economic discourses described. Finally, the last is to propose the role of Genesis 47.13-50 within Genesis 37-50 in terms of ideological, theological and economic projects.

3.1. Literary connections-disconnections: The first comparison and contrast of the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects of Genesis 37-50 and Genesis 47.13-26 is by way of some of their literary dimensions. The person who included Genesis 47.13-26 within the framework of the Joseph story was careful to link both accounts with certain details. He uses the setting, some of the characters, the economic measures and the discourse of salvation in order to link both narratives. Genesis 37-50 as a whole and Genesis 47.13-26 as a literary unit occur in Egypt[70] in the time of famine (Genesis 41.54 and 47.13), although Joseph's response to this is told differently. His response could have depended on the people who were affected by it, which also suggests the differences and similarities that both accounts have in terms of characters. Even though the preoccupation about Joseph's family disappears in Genesis 47.13-26, Joseph, the Egyptians and the Pharaoh remain in the events narrated, giving the story a continuity with that which is told in chapters 39-41. Joseph appears in both accounts, but he seems to be very different from one portrayal to another.

As discussed before, the Joseph story seems to be very partial to presenting a positive image of the son of Jacob, at the point when the economic measures he puts into practice in chapter 41 to deal with the famine are told in a way that hides any negative aspect of them. The Egyptians and peoples from other lands come to Joseph, buy food and survive, including his family (Genesis 45-47), and no more detail of their lives is given. However, Genesis 47.13-26 is not so generous with Joseph's character, and puts him in the centre of an unjust socio-economic system that extracts all the possessions of the people and condemns them to taxation and servitude in exchange of bread. This is the first dynamic of the relationship between Genesis 47.13-26 and its literary context. Even though both texts occur in Egypt in the middle of a famine and narrate Joseph's socio-economic measures to solve it, the narrative in Genesis 47.13-26 demonstrates the negative impact of his actions, while the other is limited to tell us only about the people getting food to survive. This implies that there is a difference in the portrayal of Joseph's actions, with Genesis 47.13-26 being very clear at showing their negative impact in the population. The conflict between the two stories and Joseph's portrayal in them increases when we look at those who benefit or suffer from the consequences of Joseph's actions. Genesis 47.13-26 tells us how the Egyptians lose everything in order to get food, to the point of slavery and taxation to Pharaoh in perpetuity.

Genesis 1-12 and 28, on the other hand, tells us about Joseph's family in Egypt, where they were given the best land to settle and also how they received food and other cares. The contrast is

[70] I consider that Genesis 47.13-26 is the continuation of the previous events, which take place in Egypt.

more evident when the boundaries of Genesis 47.13-26 are read carefully: Genesis 47.12 and 28 informs that there was food for Joseph's family, who fructified and got land. Between those two verses, the story says how the Egyptians are impoverished, lack food and lose their land. Joseph is responsible for the well-being of his family and also the negative fate of the Egyptians, so the dynamics, or resemblances and contrasts between the two accounts are highlighted. The socio-economic dimensions within the stories are also different, the accounts showing different implications of Joseph's measures to deal with the famine. In chapter 41.34-36 and 50 the story shows how Joseph takes the fifth of the production from the population and then sells that food to them. The purpose of the action is to help the land's inhabitants survive (41.36), but there is no suggestion that the measure will establish perpetual dependency, but only as a response to a crisis due to the famine (41.35). The people survive, as was the purpose of the measure (41.56). However, Genesis 47.13-26 shows a system of extraction that ends up establishing a perpetual tax for Pharaoh of the 20%, where the people are not free but will be Pharaoh's tenants. Even though both systems are different, the story in Genesis 47.13-26 seems to be interested in conveying the disastrous implications for the life of the Egyptians. In the story of Genesis 37-50, the negative implications of the socio-economic measures are hidden. I have said that Joseph as a character is contrasted in both accounts. However, another viewpoint is to think about what happens in Genesis 47.13-26, Joseph's unjustness, as unsurprising and in accordance to a behaviour pattern he has shown in the previous chapter, where he is eager for power, untrustworthy and unstable.

Another way to compare and contrast the literary dimensions of Genesis 37-50 and 47.13-26 is by the discourse of salvation they portray. Both accounts are linked by the usage in 47.25 and 50.20 of the same word, "hyx", which conveys the idea of "preserving of keeping alive". However, the words have different implications. In Genesis 37-50 it seems to convey that Joseph saved the life of the Egyptians in Genesis 41 and of his family in 47.12 and 28. His actions in these texts do not appear to have caused any harm to the people[71]. This same thing cannot be said about Genesis 47.13-26, where the Egyptians claim that Joseph "preserved their lives" by being very impoverished, enslaved and perpetually taxed by Joseph. There, the discourse of salvation is contradictory to that in Genesis 50.20.

The economic language in Genesis 47.13-26 seems to be closely connected to that in Genesis 41.34-36, 47-49 and 55-56. Both texts mention the problem of the famine (47.13 and 41.55) and an economic measure to solve it that includes taking resources from the Egyptians (47.14, 15, 19 and 41.35 and 48). The Egyptians are taxed in 41.35 in a temporary measure to deal with the famine.

[71] However, in 41.56 Joseph sells the Egyptians what he has taken in 41.48-49 for their own survival. This action would put into question the affirmation of the positive consequences of Joseph's way to "preserve life".

However, in 47.26 this economic policy becomes a statute in the land of Egypt, acquiring a permanent character. The two situations resemble each other, and has promoted the hypothesis that supports that these two accounts were once a single narrative but were later separated by one redactor (See Westermann 1986). Interestingly, the taxation has a different consequence in each narrative. In 41.56 the narrator says that the Egyptians are hungry and Joseph's sells them grain, giving no more detail of their situation. However, the tax in Genesis 47.13-26 is the consequence not of the famine, but of the dispossession of the Egyptians, who have nothing to pay for bread and therefore use the tax as a way to afford their sustenance. It is clear, nevertheless, that the second narrative needs the first one, since the lack of bread the Egyptians experience in 47.13 is the result of Joseph's policies in 41. The two narratives are connected to each other, and 41 can play the role of foreseeing what will occur in 47.13-26.

The last feature to mention here is that of the theological discourse. In Genesis 37-50 the narrator tries to make sure that his audience sees God supporting Joseph. This happens in different ways though and he is very clear in chapter 39, where five times the narrator speaks of Joseph's success coming from divine guidance (verses 2, 3, 5, 21, 23). Besides this explicit mention, the author also grants Joseph the capacity to have and interpret dreams (37, 40-41), which is considered a signal of divine wisdom. After that, the narrator puts in the mouth of the characters words that link Joseph with God. It is the Pharaoh (41.38-39) and Joseph (41. 45, 50) who claim that the divinity has guided Joseph to settle in Egypt and to apply the economic measures he does. God is present in the account of Genesis 37-50, although interestingly the presence of the divinity seems to be weaker as Joseph gets closer and closer to Egypt[72]. This element is significant because God disappears at the exact time where Joseph implements the taxation system in Egypt, what could then only come from him and not from the divinity. This absence of God is felt in Genesis 47.13-26. No reference to God is made there and can be considered an "absence of divine guidance" in Joseph's action. If God was with Joseph before, he is not there when Joseph impoverishes the Egyptians. The presence of Pharaoh, king-god of Egypt, and the priests, is highlighted in this little account, and could suggest that now the God of Joseph is Pharaoh and his religion the one of the Egyptian priestly class. The literary connections between Genesis 47.13-26 and the whole account of the Joseph story are clear. Setting, characters, economic and theological dimensions appear in both and share some characteristics. However, the differences are also perceived suggesting not only that Genesis 47.13-26 appears to have been incorporated into the literary context at a certain point of the composition of the whole section, as already noted, but also that it would have had a different purpose from that of Genesis 37-50.

[72] Some claim that God's company of Joseph fades when he becomes part of Pharaoh's court, arguing that the fact that Joseph needs a goblet of divination is a sign that God is not with him anymore.

3.2. Socio-historic connections-disconnections: Already discussed is the difficulty of dating the compositions of Genesis 37-50 and 47.13-26 and the ideo-theological and socio-economic projects that their stories reflect. In the case of the first text, it fits several realities that include the United Monarchy of Solomon, the reign of Jeroboam I, the context of Amos and Hosea, and the time of the Persian rule in Jerusalem. All of them can be related to the Joseph story, especially because they represent ideo-theological and socio-economic projects closely related to the monarchy or totalitarian power and also to the tributary system.

The context reflected in the Joseph story is that of political and economic polemics, characteristics shared by the four options I have mentioned. In terms of theological interests, the ones that represent the monarchy are the realities related to Solomon and Jeroboam I, which would be preoccupied in legitimizing their rule and socio-economic measures before the population. On the other hand, Amos/Hosea and the Persian period were those that proposed these contexts (Coote 1991 and Brett 2000) as coming from circles resisting monarchy or imperial rule. Their position, therefore, would be to delegitimize such power and its ideologically, theologically and economically controlling ways with the population. This is also difficult to confirm, but it can be said that both contexts reflect those of Solomon and Jeroboam, a time of contestation and conflict between groups with different socio-economic and ideo-theological projects. Because of the way that the Joseph story seems to defend the centralized power, the tributary system, and God's support to both, the story can be said to come from a reality where kingship and its socio-economic measures are being legitimized due to strong contestation. As a result, I see the text as a monarchic propaganda.

Genesis 47.13-26 has also been linked to different socio-historic contexts. Usually It has been connected to Solomonic times, but some have suggested, and as I also have described, also with the time of Jeroboam, Amos and Hosea, the seventh century and the Persian times. In this aspect, it could be close to the context of composition of the Joseph story, although I think it responds to this account and so must be placed a little bit later. Genesis 47.13-26, and also 37-50, reflect a time of socio-economic and ideo-theological conflict, although in my opinion they each address the issue from a different perspective. The story portrays a very negative image of the tributary system and its sponsors, and by implication seems to come from groups that rejected the programme of the monarchy and its economic measures. As a result, the context of Solomon, Jeroboam, Amos and Hosea and Persian rule could also be part of its context of composition, since all of these represent a reality where the population was economically exploited and ideo-theologically dominated. However, it seems to be sided far from the interests of legitimation of the rulers and instead concerned to criticize their systems and show their injustice, so if it shares the context of Solomon and Jeroboam with Genesis 37-50, it

would not share its socio-economic and ideo-theological programme but contest it. On the other hand, Genesis 47.13-26 could be part of groups like those of Amos and Hosea, or the ones that resist Persian domination, showing the evil actions of the rulers and their false discourse of salvation, which brings poverty and slavery. Therefore, it can be said that Genesis 37-50 and Genesis 47.13-26 reflect a reality of socio-economic and ideo-theological conflicts. The monarchy and centralized rule together with the tributary system are subjects of dispute, and even though both texts seem to reflect a reality like that, they represent a different perspective of it, Genesis 47.13-26 being a counter discourse of the one found in Genesis 37-50.

3.3. Socio-economic and ideo-theological connections-disconnections: The literary constructions of Genesis 37-50 and 47.13-26 and the possible socio-historic context where the stories could have been composed contribute to re-construct what could be considered their main socio-economic and ideo-theological projects. As I mentioned before, Genesis 37-50 seems to come from the context of the monarchy and its interest to legitimize its rule and socio-economic measures. The main ideological point the story highlights is that centralized power is needed, and that is why the story spends so many pages trying to show Joseph's capacity to govern the land with wisdom and bring stability to those who live in it. Joseph then evokes Solomon, Jeroboam or any other monarch who needs legitimation to rule in Israel. Besides, the rule of these kings included a different socio-economic organization. The economic independence of the tribes, if it existed at some point in Israelite history, is overturned by the tributary system, which also needs to be presented as positive in the story. That is why Joseph's measures in Genesis 41.37-38 are considered wise and beneficial for Egyptians, foreigners and even Jacob's family (41.57; 45.5), since such positive portrayal would contribute to the acceptance of the tributary system in real life. In addition, the author of the Joseph story uses religion to legitimate his political interests. He presents Joseph, and therefore the ruler evoked by him, as God's protégé, showing him as someone with God's wisdom to govern. The divinity is the one who desires that "one brother rules over the rest", as Joseph's words show in Genesis 45.5b: "God sent me before you to preserve life."

Genesis 47.13-26 is not in agreement with the socio-economic and ideo-theological programme of its literary context. This small account shows its contrary position in two ways. In the first, it describes all the negative implications of the tributary system. The story narrates the installation of the tributary system, which includes the population giving part of their produce to the ruler. Besides this, it also shows how in order to get food or grain the people have to transact with the rulers, which usually take advantage of their privileged economic position to take the silver, the cattle, the land and the freedom of the population. Genesis 47.13-26 is very clear in showing how an economic pressure that

has made the people debt-slaves and state tenants is an evil that comes from the rulers and their tributary system. With this, it not only brings down the mask built around the tributary system as a salvific programme, but also with it delegitimizes the monarchy that implemented it. Together with this there is a second ideological position that overtly describes the injustice lived by the majority of the population, Genesis 47.13-26 is very careful to exclude God from the events narrated. God is not with Joseph when he establishes the tributary system, takes the property of the people and makes them Pharaoh's slaves. The story also implies that such actions do not come from God, but from the rulers, blaming Joseph and any other person that is evoked by this character. The ideological and socio-economic intentions of Genesis 47.13-26 are very clear: first of all, to show the monarchy and the tributary system as oppressive and non-salvific; and secondly, to make clear that centralized power and unjust economic measures do not represent the God of the Israelite's project. Both Genesis 37-50 and 47.13-26 are connected by being strongly identified with socio-economic and ideological projects; however, they belong to opposite sites and construct their discourses from different perspectives.

3.4. Genesis 47.13-26 within the Joseph story: the art of ridiculing: After having discussed the similarities and differences between Genesis 47.13-26 and Genesis 37-50 in terms of their literary, ideo-theological and socio-economic dimensions, it is time to refer to the role of Genesis 47.13-26 in its literary context. Genesis 47.13-26 demonstrates to be a literary work that reflects on the discussion around the politics, theology and economy that are part of its context, taking up a position against the state and monarchic rule in Israel by denouncing its theological discourse and socio-economic programme. This denunciation assumes the rhetorical form of ridicule, where the author of the story contrasts the disastrous results of the tributary system in the lives of the people. Besides this, by showing the negative impact of this economic programme, the author de-authorizes the official discourse of the court that maintains that this system is God's tool to preserve the life of the population. The text of Genesis 47.13-26 demonstrates that neither the rulers nor the tributary system are salvific, but instead a curse in the life of the people. The real consequences of the tributary system were characterized by a progressive dispossession of the masses. Due to debt, the Israelites lost their land through foreclosures and became state tenants in order to survive. This reality, promoted by the creation of the monarchic institution, was legitimized by a discourse that presented it as salvific. Genesis 47.13-26 unmasks a "lie that everyone could see" and probably had experienced: the monarchy and the tributary system do not save, but bring death and oppression. With this, the author shows how incoherent it is to call salvific a social order that has the only potential to bring misery to the people. The story, then, is a way to ridicule the aspirations of the monarchy to present its socio-economic model as salvific and God-inspired. This rhetorical discourse clearly enters into a conflict with

the main ideo-theological and socio-economic interests of the Joseph story, denouncing its project as false and unjust and therefore delegitimizing any attempt to govern the people by governing their perception of the reality. Genesis 47.13-26 becomes "the other side of the coin" in a story first told by the rulers, which presented only what they considered the "positive" implications of the monarchy and the tributary system. Genesis 47.13-26 goes against what Genesis 37-50 tries to propose (Reimer 1996: 70). Genesis 47.13-26 shows the "hidden agenda" of the rulers behind Genesis 37-50, and does it in a way that demonstrates the weakness of the discourse they strongly defend and sustain. Genesis 47.13-26 shows them to be wrong in all that the authors of Genesis 37-50 have defended. They spend 13 chapters in making their point, trying to show that their centralized organization and socio-economic programme is divinely sanctioned, while the authors of Genesis 47.13-26 needed only 13 verses to show its audience a truth confirmed by the real experience of the people. The socio-economic and ideo-theological programme of Joseph story, and therefore the ones who represent it, are ridiculed by the exposition of Genesis 47.13-26. Their lies and incapacity to govern for the well-being of the population is put in evidence, including their interest in taking advantage of the people in order to satisfy their greed of power and wealth. The role of Genesis 47.13-26 is to show how ridiculous it is to think that centralized power and a tributary system bring salvation. In addition, its rhetorical discourse also implies that God is absent from such an oppressive programme, leaving the option to the people to remember the Yahweh of liberation that delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and the Canaanite city-states. If Joseph is understood as like Solomon, Jeroboam, Ezra, or the rulers in the time of Amos and Micah, then Genesis 47.13-26 is a strong denunciation of the socio-economic exploitation that such states brought to the population. Genesis 47.13-26 becomes a description of what these rulers did to the population and a way to say that what is described in Genesis 37-50 is just an "illusion" and a discourse coming from the circles of power. If Genesis 37-50 reflects in certain ways the traces of some resistance to centralized power and the application of the tributary system, we could say that Genesis 47.13-26 could in fact be explaining the reasons for the rejection of the monarchy in chapters like 37. This resistance would also explain the need to construct the legitimation of the oppressive programme through the Joseph story. Genesis 47.13-26 and its description of the monarchy and the tributary system as unjust programmes also becomes a justification for the reaction of the population. The people, far from accepting blindly the discourse of domination ("you have saved us" in Genesis 47.26), something that only describes the desire of the rulers to have a docile people to dominate, reject it and organize to expel the system that oppresses them (1 Samuel 8 and 1 Kings 12). The rhetorical role of Genesis 47.13-26 in its literary context is clear: it is to ridicule the ambitions behind the Joseph story by showing them as contrary to what they claim and at the same time provide an incentive for the resistance that the people are holding against such programmes.

4. Conclusion:

In this chapter I have discussed some of the main literary, socio-historic and rhetorical elements of Genesis 37-50, the so-called Joseph story. I have problematized not only the arguments around the events narrated and their protagonist, but also highlighted the complexity of the material this section contains. As I mentioned, the characters are ambiguous and seems to be in conflict, although Joseph plays the protagonist role and has a special treatment by the narrator. The main idea seems to be to portray Joseph as God's messenger and chosen one to bring salvation, an action that he fulfils through economic measures that evoke the tributary system.

Different contexts seem to be reflected in the text. From the Solomonic monarchy to the Persian Period, the authors discussed think that a range of different realities have shaped the messages of Genesis 37-50. Rhetorically, the text could play the role of supporting or criticizing the rulers. I have paid attention also to the ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses that these 13 chapters reflect. Although different voices can be perceived in the story, the main discourse seems to be the one that supports the monarchy and its tributary system.

This characteristics make that Genesis 47.13-26 represent a counter voice in Genesis 37-50. Both would be supporting different ideo-theological and socio-economic projects, a situation that would give Genesis 47.1-26 a character of a narrative of resistance.

Genesis 37-50 has contributed to the argument I constructed around Genesis 47.13-26. It demonstrates that there are contending voices in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects in the Joseph story. In Chapter Three I will deal not with narratives in conflict with Genesis 47.13-26, but with ones which seem to share the same rhetorical interests and socio-economic and ideo-theological agenda. Such texts will contribute to strengthen the argument around a literature of resistance and therefore provide some ground for the discourse I find in Genesis 47.13-26.

Chapter Three

Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of the 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20

In Chapters One and Two, I have described the discussion in Israel around the issue of the monarchy and its socio-economic system. I first presented Genesis 47.13-26 as a voice of resistance that showed the negative impact of the tributary system in the life of the population. This text would have had the purpose to de-legitimize the discourse of salvation defended by the monarchy and attributed to its tributary system by unveiling its unjust procedures and impoverishing results. God was not with Joseph, who broke sacred customs related to land and slavery in order to take advantage of the people and to benefit the rulers. Secondly, I contrasted the socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses of Genesis 47.13-26 with the ones in Genesis 37-50, the so-called Joseph story. I argued that Genesis 37-50 works as an apologetic text that tries to portray a positive image of the monarchy and the tributary system. My proposal was that Genesis 47.13-26 was inserted in Genesis 37-50 as a voice of resistance concerning economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination, resistance that finds an echo in other Old Testament stories.

The main task in Chapter Three is to show how Genesis 47.13-26 belongs to this Old Testament tradition that rejected the centralized power and its oppressive economic mechanisms. The two texts used here are examples that I believe have close connections with Genesis 47.13-26 in this project of resistance. First, they would be the product of a reality of socio-economic exploitation, as I think Genesis 47.13-26 is. Secondly, they would have socio-economic and ideo-theological interests related to projects of resistance, denunciation and liberation. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 are the texts chosen to exemplify this. The first contributes to show how Genesis 47.13-26 belongs to a tradition that denounces the abuses of the monarchy and its tributary system; the second shows how such oppression encountered different movements of resistance.

The first part of the chapter describes the general literary and socio-historic elements of the two texts, dealing with their literary contexts and their ideo-theological and socio-economic details, including their composition and the socio-economic and ideo-theological interests behind them. In the second part, I expand on the socio-historic context related to the monarchy and the tributary system in Israel. For this, I refer to Solomon's rule and the temple-state system in Ancient Israel, two of the most important aspects that have been linked not only to the texts discussed in this thesis but also to the dynamics of socio-economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination in the Old Testament. Finally, I point out the connections and disconnections in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects

between Genesis 47.13-26 and 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, in order to define to what extent both belong to a tradition that rejected and resisted socio-economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination.

1. Literary and Socio-historic dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20

This first section of the chapter discusses the main literary elements of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 in their connection to socio-economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination. For this, I pay attention to the literary and socio-historic dimensions of the text to identify their socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses. The purpose is to see how these texts play a role in denouncing economic oppression, promoting movements of resistance.

1.1. Literary dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18

1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a text that describes the "expected" actions of a king which are concentrated in taking the resources of the population for his own benefit and that of his courtiers and servants. It is written in the form of a speech that enumerates events that resemble Genesis 47.13-26, not only in its economic consequences for the people but also in the "negative" way they are portrayed (Youngblood 2009: 93). The speech belongs to a bigger literary context, that of 1 Samuel 8-12, which deals with the transition of Israel from a tribal through to a monarchic organization (Bruegemann 1990: 1). The main characteristics of this account are discussed below.

1.1.1. Function and literary character:

1 Samuel 8.11-18 plays different roles in the section of the book of Samuel where it has been placed. Mentioned here are three of them, related to its function of relating about the transition from a tribal to a monarchic organization in Israel to create a negative image of the monarchy and to serve as an ethical guide for a king's ways.

1 Samuel 8.11.18 as transition from tribal to monarchic system: The first element readers might perceive when they approach 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is that Israel is undergoing a moment of transition (Bruegemann 1990: 1). Samuel is giving a speech related to the consequences provoked by the change of social organization within Israel. The model that is discussed here is that of the monarchy, as McCarthy (McCarthy 1973: 404) points out, saying that "the passage is an unity which tries to give a coherent account and explanation of the inauguration of the monarchy." Gordon (1984: 40) understands the debate around the monarchy narrated in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as part of the discussion of 1 Samuel 7-12, which for him shows "the contrary evaluations of the institution" not only at the end of the eleventh century, but also later on, when the "flawed nature of the monarchy became ever more apparent". This author perceives not only the moment of transition and debate but also highlights the

diversity of positions and specially the weaknesses of the monarchy. Walter Bruegemann (1990) also contributes to understand 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a record of transition in socio-economic models, although he does this placing this text in its literary context. For this author, "The books of Samuel present the radical transformation that occurred in the life of ancient Israel when Israel ceased to be a marginal company of tribes and became a centralized state" (Bruegemann 1990: 1). 1 Samuel 8.11-18 would have played an important role in the description of this transformation, being important to understand what Bruegemann considers a "radical social change and drastic configurations of social power" within Israel (Bruegemann 1990: 1). The text becomes a record where "the question of monarchy is first explicitly raised" (Bruegemann 1990: 62). Leuchter (2005: 543) agrees in seeing the text as a narrative that informs about the inauguration of the monarchic age, thinking that it is not just an innocent account but one that shows how conflicting the intention to implement the kingship was. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 not only becomes a discussion around a new institution, but also the socio-economic organization it brings with it. This is precisely what authors like West have perceived, claiming that the text shows a shift in the political economy of Ancient Israel (West 2011: 514). For him, one of the most important characteristics of 1 Samuel 8 is that it narrates the "birth" of the tributary mode of production in Israel (West 2011: 514). The speech then not only becomes an account of transition in terms of political organization, but also about the socio-economic implications it will have on the population. The tributary system and the ruin it brings to those who live under it becomes the main theme in the text.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 as negative portrayal of the monarchy: The description of the transition to a monarchy and the application of the tributary system in the text is clearly biased. Samuel spends seven verses describing how the king's tendency it to *take* from the people (8.11-17), and one verse showing how his behaviour will make the people cry for Yahweh's intervention finding no response from the divinity (8.18). The text is then not only an account of the transition in terms of socio-economic organization, but a reference to the mistake the Israelites will make in regards to their lifestyle. For authors like McCarthy (1973: 405) 1 Samuel 8.11-18 belongs to anti-monarchical passages that clearly reject the institution of the monarchy. This author states that these texts are not "just about kingship, but about kingship as a problem" (McCarthy 1973: 403). The author then picks up the central tone of the story, which seems to have the purpose to show the negative effects of the monarchic institution. Clements also finds in 1 Samuel 8 a problematic presentation of kingship. For this author, "the text contains some of the sharpest and most incisive criticisms of the institution of kingship which are to be found in the Old Testament" (Clements 1974: 399). Clements (1974: 400) argues that the material in this section was reworked to present a more hostile image of the monarchy, and besides, he thinks that the passage looks forward to show this institution as a divine punishment from God. In addition, the

author proposes that the speech is interested in warning "of the dangers inherent in the kingship" (Clements 1974: 401). His arguments, therefore, contribute to see this text as a negative account of the monarchy, trying to portray it as divine punishment and also as a model that requires of warning for those who want to implement it.

Polzin agrees with Clements in seeing the text as a warning (Polzin 1989: 85), considering also that Samuel's speech is worried about the king's powers and has the intention to block the establishment of the institution (Polzin 1986: 86). 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is not only a negative portrayal of the monarchy but an attempt to stop its implementation. Bruegemann also sees criticism and opposition of kingship in this passage. He agrees in his evaluation of this text with Clements, pointing out that "This speech placed in the mouth of Samuel is the harshest, most extensive criticism of monarchy in the Old Testament" (Bruegemann 1990: 63). Bruegemann (1990: 63) also considers that Samuel's words compose "one of the most important pieces in the Old Testament on the abuse of public power". With this opinion, the text is referred now to the realm of power and power relations, connecting the monarchy directly with an abusive system. Bodner (2009: 74) considers 1 Samuel 8.11-18, together with Deuteronomy 17.17-18, as a document that restrains the abuse of kingship, an impression that follows the same line of thinking that sees this account as anti-monarchic. In her analysis of the text, the author also cites Lyle Eslinger (1985: 170-171), who claims that "Samuel's approach is not to prescribe the justice of the king, but rather to describe the profound disadvantages of the monarchy" (Bodner 2009: 75). The last argument I want to refer to is that of Kaplan, who sees in the story the interest in constraining the excesses of monarchic power (Kaplan 2012: 631). The general impression around the story, as I have summarized, is that it has the function to give the audience the religious, economic and social problems of the implementation of the monarchy.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a list of restrictions to monarchy: The final mention I want to make in regard to the literary role of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 in its context is the one that considers the text as a list that enumerates the monarch's restrictions in Israel. Kaplan, in his article "1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a Mirror for Princes", written in 2012, defends the text as having this specific function. This author claims that Samuel's speech belongs to a genre of discourse called *Funterspiegel,* which is "a mode of critiquing and restraining royal power in the Ancient Near East by raising a mirror to its excesses" (Kaplan 2012: 626). This type of literature would have the role to "advise a king on appropriate behaviour and rituals designed to emphasize the proper role of a king in society" (Kaplan 2012: 30). The main interest behind the production of this literature, maintains Kaplan, especially in the Mesopotamian society where this type of literature comes from, was to limit "monarchic power, whose excesses bring ruin on cult and country" (Kaplan 2012: 635). As a result, Samuel's speech functions as a warning of excesses and a

rule of what a king should avoid if he wants to keep proper social and religious relations. Bodner agrees with Kaplan in this function of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a restraint of the abuse of kingship, arguing that the text represents a formula or catalogue of such abuse (Bodner 2009: 74).

The function of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 in its literary context can be seen in three different perspectives. It records the transition of the socio-economic model in ancient Israel at the same time it looks to warn about its implementation and hopes to serve as a foundation of what not to do for prospective rulers. All of them share the same preoccupation of the monarchy as an extractive and oppressive system.

1.1.2. Characterization:

The characters involved in the construction of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 are also important instruments to show the resistance to exploitative socio-economic systems and ideo-theological discourses. The two main characters that are involved in this speech are the king and the population. The author of the story uses seven verses to describe the behaviour of the king, being not neutral at all and instead showing his interest to present the monarchy in a negative way. The word used in verse 11 in regard to the kings actions is "jP'v.mi", which can be understood as the "justice, law, judgement…" or "statute of the king", and his rights and duties (Kaplan 2012: 637). However, because of the description Samuel gives of how a king is "going to act", there is no doubt that the word "jP'v.mi", commonly understood as "justice or righteousness"[73], has a different meaning. Seven times Samuel says that the king will *take* (xq;l') from the population and in the last verse the prophet states that his actions will make the people cry for God's intervention (1 Samuel 8.18). This is not a very promising beginning for the new social organization that is being introduced in Israel. The king will represent a curse for the land. He will dispossess the people of their resources, children and freedom, all for his and his courtiers' benefit. West (2011: 515) highlights two moments in Samuel's speech: "He will take" and "you shall be his slaves". For this author, slavery is the way to summarize the living conditions of the Israelites due to the monarchy they have established (West 2011: 515). The king, therefore, represents a menace for the wellbeing of the people. Clements considers that Samuel's words "presents him (the king) as a feudal tyrant, oppressive in the demands he imposes upon his people, and whose behaviour will be such as to cause the people to groan under the imposition of his rule" (Clements 1974: 399). A tyrant and an oppressor is how Clements sees the king pictured in Samuel's speech, an impression that in my opinion achieves the interest of the author of the account. Gordon agrees with Clements in the way he

[73] See Bible works reference on jP'versemi.

understands the portrayal of the king in Samuel's words. He argues that for the prophet "the king will be a despot who, by his extraction from his subjects, will turn them into slaves" (Gordon 1984: 42).

In this sense, there is a close connection between Genesis 47.13-26 and 1 Samuel 8.11-18, where both rulers dispossess the people to the point of making them slaves. Gordon sees in the king a despot and enslaver, pictures that as the text show will also be in the minds of the Israelites who lived under the monarchy. Gordon points out that "the characteristic actions of the king will be to take - "both people and possessions" – until the grossness of the error of appointing a king will be obvious to all (Gordon 1984: 42). A king is therefore presented as an extremely oppressive ruler and his portrayal should also function as a warning of the mistake that it is to place one as the leader of the people. In Youngblood's opinion, one of the characteristic words in this "regulations of the kingship" is "to take" (Youngblood 2009: 93). This author considers that "by nature, royalty is parasitic rather than giving, and kings are satisfied with the worst" (Youngblood 2009: 93). The figure of the king, therefore is abusive and as a consequence pervasive for the survival of the population. Samuel has been describing the "right" of the king, but as Bodner signals properly, the danger is that "kings can certainly be guilty of abusing their privileges" (Bodner 2009: 74). The author, in his construction of the speech, presents to his audience an image of the king that could have only caused fear and preoccupation. "The people who were asking for a king" (1 Samuel 8.10) are the other characters whose situation is described in Samuel's words. They will see their ruler dispossess them to misery, take their resources and produce, their children, and finally make them slaves. They will reach the point of crying for the Lord's intervention without response from the divinity (1 Samuel 8.18).

Samuel enumerates clearly, what the king is going to take from the people: sons (!Be), daughters (tB), fields (hd,f'), vineyards (~r,K), olive orchards (tylz), donkeys (rAmx) and slaves (db,[), including one tenth of their grain ([r;z), vineyards and flocks (!aco). He will take the best (Youngblood 2009: 93) of them for himself and his officers. Kaplan (2012: 40) highlights twice (15, 17) that "the king's actions in taking a tithe of agricultural produce and livestock…" what he considers practices that determine unjust burdens. Hertzberg also pays attention of how the king takes possession of the people's resources. The author considers that Samuel's description of his actions show how the king "intervenes in the private affairs of his subjects and has the right to dispose of fields, cattle, servants, even sons and daughters…", becoming "really is a ruler such as all the (heathen) nations have it" (Hertzberg 1964: 73). In that sense, Hertzberg suggests that what the Israelites have asked, a ruler to govern them as the other nations, has come through by the burden the king will impose over them.

The Israelites will suffer an experience similar to the Exodus, where they will be exploited (Exodus 1.11-14) and their situation will make them claim for liberation (Exodus 3.7), but with the difference that Yahweh will not intervene in their favour. Bruegemann thinks also that the situation that the Israelites will live under the dominion of the king will be "a return to the pre-Exodus situation of bondage" (Bruegemann 1990: 64). The author continues by saying that "Monarchy is presented as the undoing of the Exodus and the whole course of liberated covenanting" (Bruegemann 1990: 64). The warning is clear in this section: the people are condemned to slavery with no possibility of redemption. Those who win with the implementation of the monarchy are the rulers who will accumulate the resources of the people and live at their cost. Youngblood (2009: 93), who thinks that the average Israelite will not benefit from the monarchic organization, also shares this idea. Samuel expresses the speech that describes the socio-economic exploitation of the rulers over the population. He is not very happy with the Israelites request (1 Samuel 8.6), and in his response to their petition he makes sure that they understand the problematic future they will have under the new social organization. Gordon (1984: 42) thinks that Samuel's words are full of hostility, while Polzin (1989: 86) argues that his words reflect his opinion more than that of Yahweh's since his intention would be to block the implementation of the institution itself. I disagree with Polzin's opinion that Samuel's words come from jealousy or another feeling of this kind (Polzin 1989: 86), and think that his vision of the monarchy is the result of the author's experience with such an institution. West (2011: 515) contributes with this idea, proposing that what Samuel does is to "outline the socio-economic cost of city-state." For this author, it is clear that the story tells that "there can be no city-state without mechanisms of economic extraction" (West 2011: 515). Samuel represents the voice of resistance that warns and at the same time denounces the violence of the monarchy and its extractive system, which will end up making the Israelites slaves crying for liberation.

The one last character that I think is important in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is God. Even though he does not directly interact in this section, the narrator tells us that Samuel's description of the monarch comes from Yahweh, while also the divinity is mentioned in 1 Samuel 8.18 as the one who will not pay attention to the cries of the people once they have experienced the life under the monarchy. Yahweh, like Samuel, opposes the intentions of the Israelites of choosing a king to govern them (1 Samuel 8.7-8). Samuel's words show that the king is characterized by unjust economic practices. According to Kaplan (2012: 638), "this statement expresses what God considers inappropriate behaviour from an Israelite ruler". This idea is interesting since these practices would have come from the experience of the people with the rulers of Israel and Judah, beginning with Solomon (1 Kings 9.15). Samuel clearly states also that Yahweh will not listen to the cry of the people when they experience the cruelty of the

king, an inverse echo of the situation of the Exodus. He concludes his speech with a reference to the divinity, emphasising the fact that God rejects the political and economic project the Israelites have chosen. With this, the author also tries to show the interest behind this text, which would be to reject the oppressive institution of the monarchy and its socio-economic system by stating clearly that God is not behind it.

1.1.3. **Repetitions and images:**

The last literary element that the author uses to denounce economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination is the narrative tool of repetition and images. In terms of repetitions, the most important is the one of the word "jql", which appears seven times in the speech and emphasizes the extractive ways of the king. This word defines the type of king that will rule Israel, focused on taking from the people in order to enrich himself and those that compose his circle of power. As I mentioned before, Gordon (1984: 42) sees the king as one identified with the action of taking, both land and people. Bruegemann also notices the importance of "jql" in Samuel's speech. This author considers that "the governing verb of Samuel's characterization of monarchy is the word "take"" (Bruegemann 1990: 63), used in verses .11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. Bruegemann (1990: 63) adds that "it is the business of a centralized government to "take", whether by taxation, confiscation, or the draft."

This author, then, highlights the injustice that is related to this verb, contributing to the image of the text as denunciation of an oppressive and impoverishing system. He mentions the actions of taxation and confiscation, which will be frequent in the reality of the Israelites in texts like Nehemiah 5.1-5, and others. The king will be identified as that who takes, and the Israelites as the victims of his actions. Another repetition is that of the word "db,[", which means servant and slave. This word that appears on three occasions, has two different implications in the text. In one, it refers to those who benefit by the actions of the king, being part of his courtiers and officials and therefore receiving the resources taken by the king from the Israelites (conf. 1. Samuel 8.14-15). In this case, the word shows a high status and is applied to persons that are close to the circles of power. The third appearance of the word is the one that has a different implication. It is in verse 17, where Samuel defines the new conditions of the Israelites as slaves of the king. They are the ones impoverished and oppressed by the ruler, and the word applied to them also shows their status, but instead of putting them in the circles of power, situates them at the bottom of the pyramid. This situation not only shows the dynamics of socio-economic oppression around the monarchy, but also connects with the reference I want to make to one of the images of the story.

The last verse of the text says that "*that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day.*" The word "cry" in this verse, translated from the Hebrew "קעז", seems to have the same root as the word outcry, used in Exodus 3.7 to refer to the clamour of the Israelites in Egypt and translated from the Hebrew word (הקעה). In that sense, a connection could be made between the suffering of the people under the monarchic system to be implemented in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and the experience of bondage in Egypt according to Exodus 1-3. The image, then, functions to make the audience connect the most exploitative memory they have of their ancestors with the system they have just chosen to implement in their land. The king and his monarchy resemble the rule of the Pharaoh and the Egyptian slavery. The difference, however, is that even though in the first foreign land Yahweh heard their outcry, in their current situation he will not respond to their claims. The repetitions and the images, as a result, become instruments used by the author of this story to show not only the exploitative actions of the rulers but also the suffering the people will experience, with no hope that their God will intervene in their favour.

1.1.4. Point of View:

The literary elements of the story contribute to discuss the element of point of view, which is important to discern the ideo-theological perspectives of the socio-economic model represented in the narrative. As I mentioned in the section on characterization, the narrator relates about what the king is going to take in possession once he reaches power, getting the resources necessary for the people's production and survival. By allowing us see this dispossession (See Walsh 2009: 43-44) he could be showing that his point of view considers negatively the actions of the monarch. Another element that can contribute to discern the narrator's point of view that I have described for 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is the clear mention of the opposition of the divinity to the king's actions. The narrator mentions how Yahweh tells that he has been rejected (1 Samuel 8.7), and that because of this he will not intervene when the people cry for his intervention (1 Samuel 8.18). These two examples help to elaborate more the argument constructed here about the ideo-theological and socio-economic positions that could be found in 1 Samuel 8.11-18, which are developed further in the next sections.

1.1.5. Socio-economic discourse:

It is clear that one of the main themes in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is about socio-economic issues, so the task here is to respond briefly to what could be the literary discourse around this topic. As I discussed, 1 Samuel 8.11-18 has been understood as a negative description of the monarchy and the actions of kings. This is because of their abusive and extractive economic measures. As a result, the discourse around socio-economics in this account can be expected to be strongly opposed to the way

the Israelites will be dispossessed. The fact that the king's actions are centred in taking, and that at the end the Israelites will cry for God's intervention, are clear tools used by the author of the text to show his opposition to the monarchy and its measures. The reason for establishing a monarchy was, according to the narrator, the argument of the Israelites around Samuel's sons' corruption (1 Samuel 8.1-5). However, the model they have chosen to change that situation seems to be even worse, since the actions of the king on behalf of his servants will lead the people to slavery. This is what Caird (1953: 920) also thinks, mentioning that the result of the so-called "rights of the king" is "complete slavery". He thinks, however, that the author of the story does not suggest that the king's actions are "an abuse of privilege", proposing instead that they will be actions "inevitable and concomitant to the monarchy" (Caird 1953: 920-921).

Even though I agree that the actions of the king in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 could have been expected of rulers everywhere, I do not think that the text is merely a description of such behaviour, but a strong critique of these actions. According to Ackroyd (1970: 72), 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is close to Deut. 17.14.20 in that both show the "warn of the evils" of kingship law. The socio-economic measures of extraction and exploitation are "evil" actions, as the author says, denounced by the biblical writers and resisted by texts that look to show how a king should legislate "for right practice" (Ackroyd 1970: 72). Ackroyd contributes with the word "evil" to define the socio-economic practices of the monarch, what in my opinion matches the intention of the author if we consider the careful ways with which he describes the negative effects of the king's actions. Bruegemann also perceives how the discourse of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 in terms of socio-economic issues is an attack on the monarchy and its consequences. This author proposes that this system "brought with it the redistribution and concentration of wealth, the monopoly of land control, and the nullification of local initiatives for justice and well-being" (Bruegemann 1990: 63).

The concentration of wealth and land is one of the problems Israel will face after the establishment of the monarchy, something contested by the prophets and legislative documents, besides being actions against the identity and elementary foundations of the people. The actions of the king as they are in Samuel's speech, in terms of Israel's sacred values, could not be more negative, showing the audience that the interest behind 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is to denounce and de-legitimize the monarch and his ways. According to authors like Youngblood (2009: 93), the "regulations of the kingship…followed the contemporary semi-feudal Canaanite society", that show also that the author is trying to use the argument that such an institution is "foreign or strange" in order to attack its socio-economic measures. The coming monarchy is also compared with the time of the judges in order to emphasize its problematic socio-economic implications. Kaplan refers to this comparison, showing that

the text implies that the people will suffer the monarchy more than they did Samuel's sons as judges. He points out that "Samuel discloses to the people the way a king will exercise rulership in ways worse than that of Samuel's own sons who acted corruptly as judges" (Kaplan 2012: 638). In that sense, the discourse around the monarchy is that such an institution is a "worsening" of the current system. Kaplan (2012: 638) continues by highlighting that what Samuel does is to warn about kingship as a corrupt institution with the potentiality to threaten Israel's national welfare.

This is important in the construction of the socio-economic discourse around the king, since he would be seen as someone who puts Israel in danger. Even though kings are supposed to obey the law and not to exploit the people, his actions will be focused on taking the produce, livestock and other property of the Israelites, imposing an unjust burden over them (Kaplan 2012: 637, 640). By presenting all the unjust actions of the monarch and his rule, 1 Samuel 8.11-18 clearly has a discourse that denounces, rejects and de-legitimizes the economic measures of kingship and the dispossession and suffering they will bring on the Israelite's lives.

1.1.6. Ideo-theological discourse:

The socio-economic perspective of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a discourse that denounces and rejects the exploitation of the monarchy and its institutions, is based also in ideo-theological principles. It reflects a debate going on around the establishment of kingship and its economic measures, and the idea in this section is to mention some of the ideological and theological discourses that can be perceived from the literary level of the text, especially from its point of view. I discuss three of them: 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a sign of contestation, as a negation of Yahweh's project, and as a warning around monarchy as a wrong political project.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a sign of contestation: The first thing that we can say about 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is that it records a moment of contestation in terms of the change of socio-political organization in Israel. West has seen this dimension of the text, arguing that God and Samuel respond as they do to the Israelites' request of a king "as an indication that this text represents a moment of intense contestation. Alternative political economies are being debated!" (West 2011: 515). In that sense, the text reflects the conflict that rose around the implementation of the monarchy and the resistance of some sectors to it. Gordon (1984: 40) finds in 1 Samuel 7-12 a debate around the monarchy, saying that 8.11-18 corresponds to those texts that are "unfavourable evaluations" of the institution. Youngblood (2009: 89) defends the same argument as Gordon, saying that in 1 Samuel 8-12 readers find "diametrically opposed pro-monarchical and anti-monarchical materials." Within this debate, 1 Samuel 8.11-12 is placed against the kingship. In Clements' opinion, the text enumerates "…socio-political reasons for

hostility to (the) monarchy…" (Clements 1974: 399), which belong to a tradition that, together with Jeremiah 22.13-17 for example, show a negative attitude against the monarchy.

According to Polzin, the fact that the speech comes from Samuel is also a sign not only of those with an interest in the debate but also of the ones who are opposed to the kingship. The author maintains that Samuel's intentions are to block the institution, an attitude that comes from his interest as a judge of Israel (Polzin 1989: 86). Samuel then, represents those who for one reason or another participate in the conflict around monarchy in a position of total rejection to it. Kaplan, citing Klein, refers to the ongoing debate in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a "polemic on Israel's actual experience with subsequent kings" (Kaplan 2012: 28). This author, taking advantage of his view regarding the history of composition of the passage, points out that "1 Samuel 8...(is) a late anti-monarchic passage designed to frame the reading of historically earlier, pro-monarchic passages…" (Kaplan 2012: 26). Kaplan, in accordance with Gordon and Youngblood, contributes to the argument that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 reflects the conflict raised by the monarchy, as a voice that contested this institution.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 as presenting the Monarchy as negation of Yahweh's project: One way to understand 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is as discourse coming from groups that consider the monarchy as a socio-political organization that negates Yahweh's project. The text becomes a theological attack on the monarchy and a defence of moments that resist it and promote more egalitarian and just social orders. McCarthy has perceived this theological tension around the kingship, considering that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 belongs to a literary context which "focuses attention on the request for a king as an evil because it is a rejection of the divinely ordained institution of the judgeship represented by Samuel" (McCarthy 1973: 403). The conflict becomes not mainly about socio-economic projects but about who is sponsoring them. Yahweh is the promoter of judgeship if this system is bringing justice to the people; the fact that the Israelites ask for a king represent a negation of the just social order Yahweh has commanded. McCarthy (1973: 411) points out that the monarchy is not only evil because of not coming from Yahweh, but also because it "gives" a king the right to judge and therefore lead in war and deliver, taking the role of the divinity. What is interesting about this argument is that in a certain way, the king becomes "god" since he assumes the ability to take the people to war and to "save" them from oppression. There is a direct conflict between the divinity and the king, since the monarch seems to assume a position that should only correspond to the deity.

Clements elaborates around this conflict between God and king, saying that in 1 Samuel 8 "…the Deuteronomists wished to assert that the kingship was not an institution necessary to the salvation of Israel" (Clements 1974: 406). The author also thinks that the monarchy "was not essential to Israel's role as Yahweh's people" (Clements 1974: 406), reinforcing the idea that such an institution

not only does not come from the divinity but also cannot play the salvific role that belongs only to Yahweh. Monarchy does not contribute to the construction of Israel as a people that represent Yahweh's project. To the contrary, it is a negation of the God's will and a just society. Leuchter considers that the conflict in 1. Samuel 8.11-18 is not directly around the monarchy, but around an institution that is not mandated by Yahweh. This author states that "the popular kingship requested in 1 Samuel 8 (is) flawed by arising by human rather than divine initiative" (Leuchter 2005: 557). Referring to another text within the same literary context (1 Samuel 12.13), Leuchter (2005: 557) mentions that the king the Israelites have selected is not divinely mandated but the result of their poor choice, concluding that a "divinely mandated king…could perfectly realize covenantal ideas". Here the ideo-theological discussions are not around the monarchy or their socio-economic implications, but about who has appointed the representative in the institution. Trying to walk apart from what Yahweh has established seems to bring suffering to the Israelites, and the text wants to emphasize this point so the people understand that the burden that is imposed over them is the result of their own actions and preferences and not of their obedience to their God.

Leuchter perceives in the message of 1 Samuel 8-12 a tradition that supports the idea that "Saul's kingship is hardly an act of God…" For him, this explains why "1 Samuel 8 dooms Saul from the start by presenting kingship as anathema to Israelite existence" (Leuchter 2005: 543). In the opinion of this author, to ask for a king "like the other nations" becomes an alienation from the divine covenantal law (Leuchter 2005: 554), the element that linked Israelites with Yahweh and that therefore is denied and violated by their request of a king. The story, then, makes sure to show the enormous distance between Yahweh's will and the monarchic project promoted by the Israelites. Authors like Kaplan, besides pointing out the fact that a king not appointed by Yahweh is conflicting, gives emphasis to the issue that the socio-economic model of the monarchy described in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 does not have the support of the divinity. This author suggests that the content of the text "…expresses what God considers inappropriate behaviour for an Israelite ruler" (Kaplan 2012: 638). Kaplan (2012: 638) sees it important to notice that Samuel's speech speaks about "subversion of existing property and land rights in society as well as the conscription of various groups of people for forced labour and royal service…" According to this author, such events will contribute to the connection between 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and the "Mirror for Princes" (see Kaplan 2012: 638). The events "explicitly point out that these assertions of royal prerogative contravene the divinely ordained social order." Here it is explicitly shown how the abusive actions of the king as the one who takes property and land and also oppresses the people through corvée labour go against God and the social order he wants for the land. What the king does goes against the will of the Israelite divinity.

This idea is also supported by Kaplan, who maintains that from Halakic and Deuteronomistic perspective "any Israelite king should be obedient to the prescripts for kingship outlined in Deut. 17.14-20" (Kaplan 2012: 637), which limit the ruler in areas such as acquisition of horses, wives and silver, behaviour that is not honoured in 1 Samuel 8.11-18. According to Kaplan (2012: 637), Samuel's speech demonstrates that "God interprets their (the Israelites) request as fundamentally a rejection of divine authority and thus a threat to the very divine justice that ensures Israel's survival." The text, as a result, can be interpreted as a strong theological rejection of the exploitation of the king and also of the monarchy as a project that destroys the social order that Yahweh has brought to the land. From the text, the audience will learn that the monarchy is contrary to Yahweh's project, and therefore their survival will now be threatened.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a text that presents the Monarchy as the "wrong" political project: The establishment of the monarchy implies a comparison between the old and new order. Although it has clearly taken a position within this debate to argue against the institution of the monarchy, the text, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is a record of transition and debate. 1 Samuel 8.11-12, then, presents kingship as the "wrong" political project. Samuel is very clear in saying that the people will cry due to the king they have chosen, giving a very gloomy feeling of the consequences that the monarchy will bring to Israel. I have mentioned how McCarthy sees in this text the denunciation about monarchy "as a problem" (McCarthy 1973: 403), which shows the position of the author of the story in terms of suggesting that the change of political system was a mistake. When analysing this text, Bruegemann (1990: 63) signals that "Ancient Israel had thrived on covenantal localism; monarchy in principle is opposed to such possibility and initiative and to the vulnerability of the covenanting." The conflict between the old and the new system is around covenant and the danger that the monarchy imposes on the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites. The text shows how the monarch's extractive methods will also benefit a small elite that will emerge next to the ruler, promoting the creation of new social groups that were not present in the previous organization but which will be necessary for the rule of the king. In this regard, Bruegemann explains the need of the ruler to take possessions from the people, stating that "the king needs the land to reassign to his most trusted allies as a way of sustaining a network of power and alliance" (Bruegemann 1990: 63). The new social order will imply that the king cuts "into Israel's labour and the means of tribal life and eventually will impose a usurpatious tax" (Bruegemann 1990: 64).

The socio-economic burden changes for the Israelites with the establishment of the monarchy; their tribal life is perturbed since part of the means for survival will be destined to sustain the king and his court and also a tax will be imposed which was unknown for them in the previous system. The

whole idea of the text transmits kingship as something negative and therefore a mistake from those who supported its introduction in the land. Bruegemann thinks that in the 1 Samuel 8.11-18 "text the possibility that a monarchy might exist that is not rapacious is not even entertained. There is, according to this text, only a way a king can be" (Bruegemann 1990: 63). The people will experience the rapacious ways of the king (1 Samuel 8.18) and therefore will be aware of how mistaken they were in rejecting God's socio-political project and introducing the one similar to "all the nations". The text is not positive about the election by the people, and demonstrates clearly that "the popular demand of a king leads to calamity" (Leuchter 2005: 556). The request of the people for a king seems to be justified by a problem of internal corruption (Kaplan 2012: 636); however, at the end of the story, monarchy will demonstrate to be an institution more corrupt than the judges and also a threat to Israel's welfare (Kaplan 2012: 638).

After discussing the main literary dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and considering it as a possible socio-economic and ideo-theological discourse, we may conclude that the text's point of view strongly denounces the abuses and exploitations of the institution of kingship and its city-state system.

1.2. Socio-historic context of 1 Samuel 8.11-18

In the first section, I have discussed how 1 Samuel 8.11-18 belongs to a polemic around the institution of the monarchy. It has contributed to perceiving the voices that denounced the exploitation of the king and its socio-economic system, presenting it as a social order that promotes slavery and is contrary to Yahweh's liberating project. This second section tries to trace the historical context of the text, looking for the socio-historic events that can reflect the situations narrated in it and that also could have originated its socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses.

1.2.1. Composition:

In order to try to reconstruct the context that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 could be reflecting, I discuss here elements around its authorship, time, place and history of composition, the resources used and possible intention behind its creation.

Time, place and authorship: 1 Samuel 8.11-18 has been a text connected with different socio-historic contexts. Even though the tendency has been to suggest that this text belongs to a late period, especially in connection with the Deuteronomistic history, there have been authors that have placed it in early times, even in the context of Samuel and Solomon. Mendelsohn is one of those who think that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a product of the context where the events are actually narrated. By comparing the actions of the king as described by Samuel's speech with parallels of the Canaanite society in the eleventh century, Mendelsohn concludes that "the Samuel account is an authentic description of the

semi-feudal Canaanite society as it existed prior and during the time of Samuel…" (Mendelsohn 1956: 18). This author, then, thinks in the possibility that the text had its origin in the context of Samuel, reflecting not the reality of Israel under the monarchy (there was no monarchy in this land at the time) but the situation of the neighbouring Canaanite societies. For Mendelsohn "the prophet himself or a spokesman of the anti-monarchical movement of that period" composed the text (Mendelsohn 1956: 18). This author, furthermore, uses the evidence of Akkadian texts from Ugarit to say that "the manner of the king does not constitute a "rewriting of history" by a late opponent of kingship" (Mendelsohn 1956: 22). Instead, he defends the thesis that the text is "…an eloquent appeal to the people by a contemporary of Saul not to impose upon themselves a Canaanite institution alien to their own way of life" (Mendelsohn 1956: 22). Even though I do not really agree with the possibility of a text being written in Israel in such an early time, there is the possibility of movements around Samuel´s time, if it existed, opposing the institution of the monarchy. Besides, I think also that the most possible circle that could have worked in the composition of the story was one related to anti-monarchic interests.

Ackroyd agrees with Mendelsohn in seeing what is described in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as events that happened before Israel became a state. According to this author, "such practices as the military provisions, the possession of royal lands, the tithing of produce, the imposition of forced labour, are all familiar from city-states long before Israel's time" (Ackroyd 1970: 73). However, he disagrees with Mendelsohn in using such data to argue for an early date of the text. He suggests that finding similar criticisms as those of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 around the time of the foundation of the Israelite monarchy "…does not mean that this passage has not been influenced by the experience of Israel's subsequent history" (Ackroyd 1970: 73). In this statement, Ackroyd affirms what Mendelsohn rejected, that the text is a projection to the past of Israel's experience with the monarchy in later times. Ackroyd supports his idea by pointing out that Saul and David were kings more related to the "judge type of institution" and that "it is only with Solomon and the successor of the divided kingdoms (that) do we find the political and economic disadvantages described here" (Ackroyd 1976: 73). This author then introduces other possible contexts that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 could be reflecting, arguing that Solomon or the monarchs of the divided kingdoms could fit the description of Samuel's speech.

Clements is another author who sees in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 the description of what seemed to be Solomon's rule. The author follows Noth's argument that the text comes from Deuteronomistic circles (Clements 1974: 400), however, understanding the composition as a reflection on the monarchy of the son of David. Clements (1974: 403) considers that Solomon comes closer to the portrayal presented in the text. Solomon would have been the one who "exacted forced labour from Israel in order to carry through his extensive building projects (1 Kings 14.22-28 and 9.15-22), and the

imposition of this burdensome work levy was connected with Jeroboam's rebellion" (Clements 1974: 403). He connects these actions with the descriptions of Solomon's "large court and luxurious palace" to propose a close relationship between the list of royal oppressions in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and the Solomonic time (Clements 1974: 403). It was this king, according to Clements, "who endeavoured to establish the monarchy of Israel in the mould of a typical oriental despot" (Clements 1974: 403). Due to all these connections, Clements concludes that the list in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 "was drawn up with the very bitter memory of Solomon's exaction and excesses in mind…", supporting also that "...he was the ruler whose portrait was here being painted so unfavourably" (Clements 1974: 404). His argument contributes to seeing 1 Samuel 8.11-18 as a later text which reflects on early monarchic times, especially those related to the abusive kingship of Solomon. Authors like Youngblood contribute in this discussion, arguing that even though corvée was common in the Ancient World, it "was unknown in Israel during the time of the judges and was introduced there under the monarchy" (Youngblood 2009: 93). This author believes that even though Saul and Absalom implemented measures similar to the ones listed in Samuel's speech, Solomon would become "the most notable offender" of them (Youngblood 2009: 93).

Leuchter is another author who doubts about the possibility that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is composed around the context of the 11th or 10th century. For him, "there is little indication that the Israelites of the mid-11th century BCE, rooted as they were in the sequestered world of the clan system, were so intimately familiar with these earlier forms of government…" For this author it is not possible to reflect on an institution whose actions "…had not yet been established as normative" (Leuchter 2005: 546). He thinks this is what happens in a text which talks about monarchy even though it has not yet been implemented in the land (Leuchter 2005: 546). Instead, he suggests that "the linguistic style of the text…bears greater similarity to texts from the late seventh through the sixth centuries BCE… (possessing) lexical characteristics that identify it as a relatively late composition despite its literary context" (Leuchter 2005: 547). This author, then, using textual elements, proposes that the composition of the text and the context resembles the seventh century BCE. Basing his argument in the similarities between 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and neo-Assyrian royal annals, Leuchter proposes that the text is not talking about the oppression lived by the people due to the actions of a local king, but due to the invasion of foreign empires (Leuchter 2005: 548). For Leuchter (2005: 548), the text "refers not to Israel's experience with despotic Israelite kings, but Israelite experience with neo-Assyrian Empire." Leuchter's thesis is very interesting, and even though he locates the centre of the oppression in powers "outside" Israel, he makes a connection with the text and socio-economic oppression and ideo-theological domination, which is, in my opinion, the reality that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is contesting. Even

though Leuchter thinks that there is a possibility that resistance to kingship could have been originated in the time of Samuel, he maintains his idea that the text is a composition of the seventh century and its encounter with Assyrian domination:

> "While the original resistance to kingship probably did originate at an early period among sacred leaders such as Samuel, the current form of the text derives from the Josianic period, when Judean autonomy from Assyria prompted a re-establishment of ideas presented as authentically Israelite in the growing body of religious literature" (Leuchter 2005: 552).

Leuchter's point, then, is to show how 1 Samuel 8.11-18 conflicts polemically with Assyrian domination (Leuchter: 2005: 553). The author contributes with the position that the text derives from the Josianic period (Leuchter 2005: 553-555), maintaining that "the king like all the other nations" makes direct reference to Tiglath Pileser, Salmanasar and Sargon (Leuchter 2005: 555-556). Even though I think that the date given by the author is very plausible, I still doubt that the text wants to refer to a foreign rule instead of a local monarchy.

However, Leuchter helps to place the text in the context of the seventh century and the monarchy of Josiah. This may be useful for connecting the composition of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 to the Deuteronomistic movement. Some authors make sense of the story in the context of this theological group. Hertzberg, for example, thinks that the compiler of the text "belongs to Deuteronomistic circles" (Hertzberg 1964: 9). Kaplan, also thinks that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a document from the Deuteronomistic History that in certain way represents an ancient catalogue of royal oppressions (Kaplan 2012: 627, 642). Such a text would have had relations to Babylonian documents of the eighth and seventh centuries (Kaplan 2012: 633), which implies that its composition occurred around that time or later. Authors like Youngblood see another possibility, suggesting that the text could have been composed or edited in post-exilic times (Youngblood 2009: 89). He argues that antimonarchical sources in 1 Samuel 8-12 "arose in the bitterness and disappointment of exile some time (whether sooner or later) after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC" (Youngblood 2009: 89).

These arguments described help to create a sense of the contexts that could be behind the production of 1 Samuel 8.11-18. The story certainly seems to connect with different socio-historic contexts. Gordon (1984: 44) states that "Samuel's speech is not especially applicable to Solomon's reign, since what is given is nothing more than a general sketch of the ways (of the king) in and out of Israel, and in almost any period." However the general feeling is that the text was composed in a later period of time (Caird 1953: 921-922; Smith 1977: 57), and seems to evoke the moment where a shift in the political economy in Ancient Israel occurred (West 2011: 514).

Due to the content of the text, the consensus is that it comes from those who feared and opposed centralized power (Bruegemann 1990: 63). These opponents would have used the text to argue against the actions of the monarchic institution. Walter Houston helps us not to idealize those groups behind the production of the text. He suggests that those involved in the composition of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 were elites involved in oppressive relations with the masses of people and who feared the king's intervention in their economic relations (Houston 2006: 137). This position is very interesting for the many reasons it calls us to interpret the text carefully, remembering what Mosala mentions about the need to avoid confusing the theology of the oppressor with discourses of liberation (Mosala 1989: 13).

Sources and process of Composition: In the discussion about authorship and the time and place of composition, some traces of the resources used for the creation of the text appeared as well as the process through which was established its final written version. One of the proposals was that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 was an ancient document reworked by the Deuteronomistic theologians in order to fulfil anti-monarchic purposes.

This position is specially defended by McCarthy, who thinks that the "older form of the history (is) substantially the same as the present, which is simply the Deuteronomistic redaction of this older history" (McCarthy 1973: 404). This reworking, however, is not innocent, since it would have transformed an ancient pro-monarchic narrative into anti-monarchic material marked by prophetic ideas (McCarthy 1973: 404; conf. also Clements 1974: 400). McCarthy (1973: 404) considers that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 (together with 10.17-27 and 12) shows the process of incorporation of anti-monarchic legends into a basic source, which produced the basic Deuteronomistic form of this history. In his opinion, there was an old positive tradition about Saul and David, which included 1 Samuel 9.1-10:16 and 11.1-15, which was expanded by a Deuteronomistic historian who composed anti-monarchic texts and inserted them into the older story (McCarthy 1973: 405). In this sense, for McCarthy "the periscope would not be a final conflation of several sources. It would be a composition reinterpreting one older history by interpolation" (McCarthy 1973: 405). McCarthy's explanation of the composition of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and its literary context are really help to perceive the contestation around the monarchy and its socio-economic project. It helps us to see a possible re-interpretation of pro-monarchic texts in 1 Samuel 8.11-18, where not only this propaganda but the reality defended in it (the monarchy) are strongly criticized. The institution itself and the documents written in its favour are being de-legitimized.

Clements agrees with McCarthy in seeing in the literary context of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 a contestation between pro-monarchic and anti-monarchic traditions (Clements 1974: 400). The author highlights the position of Boecker, who thinks that the text "was a separate formulation…incorporated

by the Deuteronomists…because it suited their purpose in elaborating a warning of the dangers inherent in the kingship" (Clements 1974: 400-401). The text becomes an individual document inserted in a pro-monarchic context to contest the apology for the king. Clements proposes that the text is a reflection projected to the past, where the Deuteronomistic authors reflected on Israel's experience with the monarchy and then tried to put a warning against it just at the moment where the transition from tribal to monarchic government was narrated (Clements 1974: 408). Besides, this edition was also interested not to condemn monarchy per se, but the monarchy that did not represent the Davidic House. Because of this, the work of the Deuteronomists was to blame kings like Saul for the negative behaviour of other kings, like Solomon, with the purpose of defending the Davidic rulers (Clements 1974: 408-409).

Clements is not very clear in his view of the sources for 1 Samuel 8.11-18. However, his mention of Boecker's idea of an anti-monarchic document inserted in a pro-monarchic literary context suggests that Clements thinks of it as an anti-kingship tradition. This has been the general view of most authors, who see in the material used to compose 1 Samuel 8.11-18 resistance to the monarchy. Leuchter, for example, argues that this text shares similarities with Assyrian royal annals, concluding that they could have functioned as a source for its composition (Leuchter 2005: 548-551, 553). On the other hand, Bodner (2009: 74), citing Bruce Birch, mentions that the phrase "justice of the king" could indicate "some formal standard for the behaviour of kings", although she does not explore or propose any source for such an established list. The perception of a standard document about the behaviour of kings is also mentioned by Kaplan, who thinks that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 "takes inspiration from a diverse group of literary materials and rituals designed to constrain monarchic power" (Kaplan 2012: 625). The material he has in mind is the Babylonian "Mirror for Princes" (Kaplan 2012: 630), composed around 760-748 BCE to "shape the behaviour of the monarch" (Kaplan 2012: 633). Kaplan sees, as do other authors mentioned here, that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a Deuteronomistic insertion that reflects on the abuses of kingship (Kaplan 2012: 627).

1 Samuel 8.11-18 appears to be a text constructed from Israelite and foreign resources with a long period of construction until its final insertion in 1 Samuel 8-12 by the Deuteronomists.

1.2.2. Socio-economic and ideo-theological interests: I have given a general description of the possible socio-historic contexts reflected in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and the process of composition the text might have followed. Information of this kind provides details to consider the point of view and socio-economic and ideo-theological interests that could have moulded the story. In sum, the text seems to represent the interests of those worried by the socio-economic exploitation of the monarchy, criticizing the system as something that does not harmonize with Yahweh's project.

As I have mentioned, authors like Caird (1953: 921-922), McCarthy (1973: 411-412), Clements (1974: 408), Leuchter (2005: 547), West (2011: 514) and Kaplan (2012: 625) are in agreement, seeing in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 a rejection of the monarchy, its exploitative socio-economic system, and also its lack of divine legitimation.

The intentions of the text, then, can be summarized as attempts to criticize kings not in Samuel's time but of a later age (Caird 1953: 921-922), to show the monarchy as an institution that goes against Yahweh and the judges he established (McCarthy 1974: 411-412), and to warn against the dangers of kingship (Clements 1974: 400-401). This rejection also needs some precision because McCarthy and Clements agree that the polemic is not only against kingship per se. Instead, they see the text as arising from the conflict between Saulite and Davidic houses and their interests to govern and as the intention of the final editors to relate oppressive rulers with Saul and not with Davidic kings (McCarthy 1973: 410; Clements 1974: 408). This detail is important, because those behind the story could even have been related to powerful classes trying to de-legitimize those who competed with them for the throne, but having no interest to relieve the suffering of the majority of the population due to the burdens imposed by the rulers.

Leuchter also mentions the rejection of the monarchy, but he thinks that the text responds to the image of the institution in the exilic period, when a scribe had the interest to present a polemic against kingship (Leuchter 2005: 547). Kaplan sees the text as worried by a monarchy that threatens the social and cultic aspects of Israelite life (Kaplan 2012: 625) that encourages the writers to be overt about the abuses of the king.

All these authors highlight the concerns behind the text as that of contesting the monarchy and its dangers for the social and religious life of the people. However, we certainly cannot forget Houston's contribution, showing how the text would not originate in circles rejecting socio-economic exploitation of the masses, but in too much control by the king that would also limit their power over those who they (these circles) want to dominate (Houston 2006: 136-137).

What we can say about the text, then, is that in its literary and socio-historic aspects it contends strongly with the monarchy and its socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions.

1.3. Literary dimensions of 1 Kings 12.1-20

1 Kings 12.1-20 can be considered the counterpart of 1 Samuel 8.11-18. If the latter narrates the origin of the institution of the United Monarchy, the former narrates its breakage. If the last one enumerates the abuses of kings and the suffering of the population, the first one confirms these situations. 1 Kings 12.1-20 describes the failure of the United Monarchy and the beginning of the

divided kingdoms. Like 1 Samuel 8.11-18, which narrates a change in the socio-economic and political situation of ancient Israel, 1 Kings 12.1-120 informs about the rise of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as individual political entities after the United Monarchy under Saul and the Davidic House. What is important about these events is that the schism seems to occur as the result of economic exploitation, the main theme in this study. The focus on 1 Kings 12.1-20 is to describe its socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions, emphasizing the possibility that this text shows movements that rebelled against the exploitative measures of the monarchy, its economic system and ideo-theological programme. To do this I begin by describing the general literary dimensions of the section, including structure, characterization, and repetitions and images, to conclude with the main ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses that the text reflects. Secondly, I discuss briefly the socio-historic information around the story, its process of composition, authorship, time and possible intention.

The literary elements in 1 Kings 12.1-20 show a reality of economic exploitation from the monarchy, actions that are contested by the population of Israel, who separate from the dominion of the Davidic house and create a new state located in the North. The events in this section narrate the abuse of the previous king, Solomon, and the request of the Israelites not to abolish the monarchy, but to keep it with a less extractive machinery. The negative policies of the new king and his intention to continue the exploitation results in rebellion and schism.

1.3.1. Structure:

1 Kings 12.1-20 can be structured in a way that demonstrates the attitude of the monarchs to exploit their subjects:

a. Request to lighten the *heavy yoke* imposed by the monarch: 1 Kings 12.1-5

b. Rehoboam's *refusal* to listen to the Israelites' request: 1 Kings 12.6-11

c. The confirmation of the imposition of the *heavy yoke* on the Israelites: 1 Kings 12.12-15

d. Israelites' *rejection* of Rehoboam's monarchy: 1 Kings 12.16-17

e. Failed attempt to impose the *heavy yoke* on the Israelites: 1 Kings 12.18-20

The section in 1 Kings 12.1-20 demonstrates the dynamics of *imposition of* and *resistance against* economic exploitation. The central moment of the story comes when Rehoboam decides to rule more harshly that his father Solomon, who imposed on the Israelites a *heavy yoke* (emphasized eight times in 4, 9, 10, 11 and 14. This event is preceded by two set of dialogues that show the attitudes for and against economic abuse and oppression. Verses 1-5 become a denunciation of Solomon's

exploitative rule, which imposed on the Israelites hard labour and a heavy yoke (1 Kings 4). Clearly, Rehoboam's difficulties in assuming the monarchy are due to the terrible kingship of his father, who exhausted the people with his abuses. The Israelites present the king with conditions before they will agree to have him rule over them: "lighten the hard labour…" (1 Kings 12.4). The request is not for the abolition of the monarchic institution, but for a change in the way monarchic power is exercised so it does not consumes the lives of the people (Cogan 2000: 347). Section two presents the two paths the king can take: firstly he is counselled to listen to the words of the Israelites, but he immediately rejects their words. Instead, he listens to the counsel that motivates him to impose an even harsher yoke than his father's on the Israelites. This event is an indication that the story will not have a successful conclusion for the monarch and result in relief for the people.

The third section repeats the encounter of Rehoboam with the Israelite assembly. His reply is what the people feared, and more, since he confirms he will not only be like his father, but worse, confirming the monarchy as a corrupted institution that is no good for Israel. At least not if it continues to rule benefitting the powerful and neglecting the masses. Section four shows how Rehoboam's choice forces the Israelites to decide if they continue with him as king or not. They reject his rule and with it the monarchy that is centred in extractive and oppressive practices. This moment is connected with the second section, since both are marked by elections: Rehoboam chooses not to listen to the Israelites request and to disregard the older men's counsel. The Israelites choose to reject the rule of the Davidic house, characterized by the oppression of Solomon and the imminent abuse of his heir. The text concludes with a demonstration of the incapacity of the rulers to "listen to" the people and take their requests seriously. Rehoboam sends Adoram, a man who represents forced labour and the "heavy yoke" (verse 18), to the Israelites. The reaction of the people is the death of Adoram. This violent behaviour by the people is their attempt to see the abusive and extractive measures of the monarchy die. At this point, the Israelites have chosen to reject the heavy yoke. Ironically, however, the continuation of the story shows they engage in a new social organization that repeats the abuses practiced by the one they have just expelled[74]. This structure, very briefly, contributes to an understanding of the struggle between economic domination and emancipation in the story. The central moment of the story shows how the monarchy in Israel has chosen to exploit the people and put a heavy yoke on them. At the same time, at the beginning and the end of the story, the voices of those who reject and resist such oppressive measures are heard. The story finishes stating that emancipation can be enacted.

1.3.2. Characterization:

[74] 1 Kings 12.21-33 where Jeroboam replicates Judah's temple-state system.

In the dynamics of economic oppression and resistance described, two groups of characters, clearly antagonistic, can be identified. Firstly, I discuss those represented by the groups of power related to the monarchy and with an interest in the economic oppression of the population. The first person I want to refer to is King Solomon. In the story, he is described as an abusive and exploitative king who imposed a heavy yoke and hard labour on the people and disciplined them with whips. This reference is connected to Solomon's institution of corvée for his enterprises and building projects, activities that meant an extremely heavy burden for the population (1 Kings 9.15-25). The story, then, begins with a negative reference to the institution of kingship, showing the suffering and oppression it brought to the population.

The other character that is closely related to this king is Rehoboam, the heir who now seems in danger of losing the rule over the Northern tribes due to his father's monarchy. He is presented as a king who is given the opportunity either to follow the extractive measures of other monarchs, or to have a less oppressive reign. He chooses the first approach, and therefore loses part of his father's territory. Rehoboam is presented as an incompetent king who overtly declares that he will be more exploitative than his father, something that does no good for his plans to rule. In addition, he is portrayed as a fool who listens to the harsh counsel of the youngsters instead of the cautionary words of the Elders. Burke Long (1984: 134-135) shares this perception, mentioning that the king "is brash, arrogant, and politically insensitive – a captive of impetuous youth…" He also highlights the participation of the youngsters and the Elders, showing the contrast of the projects they represent and the different relationship they assume the king needs to have with his people. Long (1984: 135) states that "the elders counsel with wise words, advising moderation; the youngsters with impetuosity, foolishness, even cynicism." That Rehoboam chooses to follow the counsel of his companions instead of the one of the former servants of his father functions in the text as a way to de-legitimize him as king, especially when it highlights his intentions to rule more harshly than Solomon. The negative portrayal of the two first characters related closely to the monarchy are instruments used by the author to criticize the negative rule of kings and therefore justify the revolution against the Davidic house.

There are two more characters related to the monarchy and the machinery of oppression that contribute to the negative portrayal of the king's rule. The first one is the collective of the young men who grew up with Jeroboam. They are close to the court and in the service of the king, advising him to add to the yoke Solomon had already imposed on them (1 Kings 12.11). In a monarchy, clearly it is not only important who the king is, but also who are those that give him counsel. 1 Kings 12.1-20 is a critique not only of the monarch but of his courtiers, especially when they work together in the oppression of the people. One could ask, for example, about the role of the Elders in Solomon's

kingship, and if they supported the king in his oppressive actions or if they also advised him to lighten the burden and their words were ignored. The last character connected to the oppressive group is Adoram, who appears in verse 18. He is described as the one in charge of the forced labour, a practice that caused the Israelites to suffer under Solomon's rule (1 Kings 12.4). Rehoboam sends him to meet the Israelites, who react to this attempt to continue the socio-economic oppression by stoning him to death (1 Kings 12.18). Adoram is the representative and symbol of the oppression of Israel from the Davidic house. He is connected to corvée labour in 1 Kings 4.3 and to tax collection in 2 Samuel 20.24[75]. He is not only a courtier that works for the exploitative rule of the Davidic house, he is especially in charge of the extractive measures of the monarchy in prejudice of the population. He is stoned, a punishment destined for those who break the law and bring danger to the land (conff. Lev 24.14; Deut. 21.21; Joshua 7.25). This is a sign that helps the reader to understand the position of the author when rejecting the abuses of the monarchy and to show that its actions go against God's will. The monarchy and the court are a threat to the life of the people. This conclusion to the story shows how the abuse and those who promote it are expelled from the community.

The second group of characters in this dynamic of economic oppression belong to those who are exploited by the rulers and who promote a change in the situation. The first character that belongs to this group is the collective assembly of Israel, whom together with Jeroboam I[76] meet the king to ask him to lighten the yoke imposed by his father. This group is characterized not only by their suffering under Solomon's rule, where they experienced forced labour (1 Kings 12.4), but also by their attempts to get rid of this domination, first through dialogue (1 Kings 12.3-4), then by peaceful separation from the oppressors (1 Kings 12.16-17), and finally through violent actions (1 Kings 12.18). The Israelites are characterized by using dialogue to defend themselves from the exploitation, and their action of killing Adoram seems to be justified by the continuing attempt of Rehoboam to dominate them. They represent the voice of resistance that not only denounces the abuses of the rulers, but also moves to organized action in which all participate in order to expel the oppressive reality in which they live and to try to construct a new project.

The other character that is part of those against kingship exploitation is the collective of the "elders". They are the ones who advise Rehoboam to listen to the people's request and whose counsel the king ignores. They represent in certain ways the courtiers that could have a different programme to rule over the people, one that at least pays attention to their cry and looks not to exhaust their resources and strength. However, the king ignores their voice, as it happens with the Israelites. In

[75] The name in these two texts is Adoniram, which is accepted as the same as the Adoram of 1 Kings 12.18.
[76] Jeroboam's presence in this text is highly contested and therefore defined as an insertion. See Gray (1964: 278).

consequence, the king sees the people rebelling against his intentions to practice a despotic rule. The assembly of the Israelites and the elders are characters used to show the injustice of the monarchy and to legitimate the rebellion against the Davidic house, which is characterized by extraction and heavy burdens.

Yahweh and the prophet Ahijah are mentioned in verse 15, and even though they do not play an active role in 1 Kings 12.1-20, they are important to understand the passage. 1 Kings 12.15 speaks of how the end of the United Monarchy is the result of an oracle, evoking 1 Kings 11.33-34, where Ahijah prophesises in Yahweh's name that he will divide the monarchy due to Solomon's disobedience to his laws. However, the participation of these two characters needs to be explored more deeply. 1 Kings 11.33-34 mentions clearly that Solomon's sin is related to the worship of other gods, and that such actions will result in his heir reigning only over one tribe (see also 1 Kings 11.32). However, in 1 Kings 12.4 and 12-15 it is clear that the reason for the rejection of Solomon's and Rehoboam's reign is forced labour and socio-economic exploitation, clearly highlighting the economic dynamics within the text. Nevertheless, that the divinity and its representative rejects the king is another instrument used by the narrator to delegitimize the Davidic monarchy and its unjust practices against the Israelites, once again providing elements to support the resistance of the people. The characters, then, function clearly to show the dynamics of economic exploitation and resistance in 1 Kings 12.1-20.

1.3.3. Repetitions and evocations:

Repetition and evocation are two other instruments used by the author of 1 Kings 12.1-20 to deal with the issue of economic exploitation in the story. The most used word in terms of socio-economic relations is "לֹעַ", which is translated as "yoke" and appears eight times in the narrative (verses 4, 9, 10, 11, 14). This has been the burden imposed on the Israelites by Solomon and the reason for their negotiation with Rehoboam. The constant repetition of this word in relation to the rule of the monarch shows the hard situation of the people due to the king, who exposed them to hard labour (connected also with the word "הדֹבָע" in verse 4) and extractive methods. This is why authors like Cogan (2000: 347) argue that "the figure of a "yoke" is frequently used when speaking of burdens and service imposed by a superior". He claims that In Mesopotamian texts, niru, "yoke", is the common term signifying dominion and rule, especially in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions (Cogan 2000: 347). Therefore, "yoke" is a common term in the Ancient Near East to describe the oppression by those in power over the masses. The yoke imposed on the Israelites is "דֶבֶכ", in other words, heavy or

weighty, but also can be translated as "oppressive and grievous"[77]. In addition, the hard labour the people experience is defined as "hv,q", which also makes reference to "hard, heavy and difficult"[78]. These strong words appear three times in the narrative and are the ones that qualify the type of situation the Israelites endure under the Davidic monarchy, one that explains the attempts to get rid of such an oppressive life.

The repetitions not only describe the situation of the people but also the behaviour of the kings. The narrator uses three different verbs (to make "hvq", to give or set "!t;n", and to load "sm[") to say how the rulers imposed a heavy burden on the population. These references appear on four occasions (verses 4 - twice, 10 and 11), and emphasize again the harsh treatment of the kings. The action to "make", "set" or "load" the people with a heavy yoke, which in the narrative becomes an intrinsic characteristic of kingship, is contrasted by the request of the Israelites to "lighten" their burden. The word for this, "llq", appears twice, in verses 4 and 10. It presents the possibility for the new king to lighten the burden imposed by Solomon. By repeating the actions of the king, the author makes a contrast between *imposing* or *lightening* a heavy burden, emphasizing the opportunity that Rehoboam has to be a better ruler for the people, which he strongly rejects.

Another repetition that describes the abusive control of the kingship is related to the word "discipline". Used on four occasions in verses 11 and 14, the word "rsy", translated as "chasten" or "rebuke"[79], again shows the type of domination Solomon exercised on the people and Rehoboam thinks to follow. The type of discipline that Solomon applied was harsh, related to "whips" (jAv), and if this was not negative enough for the monarchy, the author makes clear that the new king plans to exercise an even harsher rule, "disciplining" not with whips, but scorpions (br'q.[). "Disciplining" is the word used to compare Solomon's and Rehoboam's reigns, but "whips" and "scorpions", which appear twice each together in verses 11 and 14, are the ways used to contrast them. This connection is linked to the repetition of another word, @s;y, which appears twice as well (11 and 14) and is translated as "add" or do "again", which shows how the plan of the new king is to have an even more severe rule than his father. Rehoboam's plan is clearly to do the contrary to what he was requested: instead of lightening, he will add to the heavy yoke that has been already imposed. The additional oppression that

[77] See Biblie Works notes on the Word dbeK.

[78] See Biblie Works notes on the word hv,q'.

[79] See Biblie Works notes on the word rsy.

Rehoboam is going to apply is connected with his rejection of the old men's advice. This situation is reported twice, in verses 8 and 13, where the narrator says that the king "left behind" or "abandoned", "bz:[", the counsel of Solomon's courtiers, in a way to demonstrate his lack of interest in benefitting the Israelites through his kingship. This is what brings him to "speak harshly" (verse13) to the people, instead of speaking "good words" (verse7) as the old men advised him to. The contrast between speaking pleasantly and speaking harshly also shows the intention of Rehoboam towards the people, who instead of bringing relief to their lives plans to increase the burden on their shoulders. The Israelites resist against the exploitative plan of the new monarch, and the story, through the emphasis of different ideas, justifies the rejection of the damaging kingship.

Besides the repetitions, there are two evocations that seem to deal with the dynamics of oppression and the movements of resistance against the abuse of the monarchy. The first phrase I want to refer to appears twice in the story, in verses 15 and 16, where the narrator speaks of how Rehoboam "would not listen to the people" in the request they made him. They ask the new king to stop the oppressive regime, and he does not listen, [m;v', to them. The same verb is used in Exodus 3.7 where God hears, [m;v', the cry of the people and their suffering in Egypt. The Israelites suffer oppression, but while God hears them, the king ignores them and continues the exploitation. This could indicate that the monarchy represented by Rehoboam and those before him did not do what God expected from them. Due to this situation, the Israelites decide to use force to stop the oppression that they could not stop through dialogue. In verse 16 there is a call to Israel to abandon the contact with the Davidic house, a phrase that resembles 2 Samuel 20.1, where there is another conflict between the south and the north around the monarchy. Gray highlights this sentence, mentioning that "the form and words of the reply of the North Israelites are substantially those of the rebel Sheba (2 Sam 20.1), which suggests that there was an undercurrent of opposition to the house of David not allayed either by David or by Solomon" (Gray 1964: 284). The cry is related to rebellion, and is a way to show that the Israelites in the North did not have a peaceful relationship with the Davidic rule. To "go back to the tents" is to show the nonconformity of the people with those who rule them and the intention to start a new project. In 1 Kings 12.1-20, the idea is not only to show the reasons endangering the people, but also their resistance and attempts to construct a different reality.

1.3.4. Socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions:

In its literary dimension, 1 Kings 12.1-20 deals also with socio-economic and ideo-theological issues. In terms of the socio-economic area, it is important to bear in mind the already mentioned aspects around Solomon, the heavy yoke and forced labour. Solomon is the king who is connected with

the suffering of the people. He, together with Adoram (verse 18), are the figures that the people remember as connected to tribute and corvée, extractive measures that represented for them a heavy burden. Verse 15 seems to imply that the division of the monarchy is related to Solomon's punishment for worshiping other gods as described in 1 Kings 11.31-33. However, it is important to notice in 1 Kings 12.4, where the Israelites denounce the heavy burden imposed by Solomon. Since Rehoboam rejects lightening such exploitative measures, the people do not accept his rule. Therefore, two things can be said about socio-economic issues here: first, the Israelites' living conditions were harsh due to the oppressive actions of the monarchy, represented in the text by Solomon and Adoram; second, the socio-economic exploitation was the reason for the breakage of the united monarchy and the origin of two separate reigns. This last idea is supported by West, where he recognizes that it was the "excesses of the Solomonic state (which) led…to internal revolution" (West 2011: 517).

The socio-economic aspect in 1 Kings 12.1-20 is closely connected to the ideo-theological discourse. The institution of the monarchy that has been ruling Israel is strongly criticized. It could be said that the three first kings of the Davidic house are denounced in the text due to their oppressive measures. David through Adoram (see 1 Kings 12.18 and its connection with 2 Samuel 20.22), Solomon through the denunciation of the people due to the heavy burden, and Rehoboam due to his insistence to increment the exploitation of the people. The ideo-theological discourse does not challenge the monarchy but the way it has been exercised in Israel, where it has been controlled by the Davidic house. The ideo-theological discourse of the story suggests also that Yahweh is behind the breakage of the united monarchy. Verse 15 shows how the narrator connects the separation of the Northern tribes with the oracle of the prophet Ahijah, making reference probably to 1 Kings 11.31-34, where Jeroboam receives the word from Yahweh that says that he will reign over ten Israelite tribes. However, it is important to highlight that in 1 Kings 11.33 the text says that Solomon does not obey Yahweh's statutes and judgements, which could imply that he has committed injustices besides worshiping other gods. In spite of this, it is clear that the text suggests that from a religious point of view, the monarchy is not fulfilling its role before Yahweh, what has provoked the united monarchy coming to its end and two separate entities are founded. The socio-economic and ideo-theological projects can be identified, then, as those that reject the socio-economic exploitation of the monarchy and which legitimize rebellion against the abuse and exploitation knowing that God's consent is supporting their cause.

1.4 Socio-historic context of 1 Kings 12.1-20

In terms of the socio-historic elements of 1 Kings 12.1-20, I briefly describe the aspects related to the possible function and character of the story, its aspects of composition, and some ideo-theological and socio-economic ideas that could have influenced its construction.

1.4.1 Function and character:

1 Kings 12.1-20 seems to show the failure of the monarchy under the rule of the Davidic house and the exploitation and abuse of the people. As a consequence Jeroboam I becomes king of Northern Israel and inaugurates the time of the divided monarchy. Long supports this idea proposing that "12.1-24 must be viewed…as…aimed at the accession of Jeroboam" (Long 1984: 137). For him, it is clear that in the story "the author-editor deals with the emergence of two separate kingdoms in the wake of Solomon's death" (Long 1984: 137). Read in that sense, 1 Kings 12.1-20 tries to explain what happened with Solomon's kingdom after his death, and how this period was marked by the separation of Israel as a political entity into two reigns. In addition, Long (1984: 137) emphasizes that 1 Kings 12.1-20 not only narrates the rise of Jeroboam per se, but also how this event occurred in fulfilment of a prophecy (which also adheres to the political aspect of the situation an ideo-political dimension). It is important to say that neither Long, nor I, support 1 Kings 12.1-20 as a "historic account" in the modern sense of the word. He claims that the text is "…a story with typical marks of folkloristic or popular narration" (Long 1984: 136). This contributes to the discussion the symbolic elements that the narrative has in terms of a critique against kingship, presenting clearly the abuses of the monarchs and also the oppression of the people and their attempts to change their situation.

There are, however, other opinions concerning the character of 1 Kings 12.1-20. Authors like Cogan, for example, propose that this text is a "…wisdom" tale written in praise of Solomon's trusted advisers, whose position in the court of Rehoboam, his successor, may have come into jeopardy" (Cogan 2000: 351). Seen like this, the story would function to contrast the role of courtiers and the way the king benefits from their counsel. 1 Kings 12.1-20, then, is interested in narrating the fall of the united kingdom and the rise of the divided monarchy, giving political, religious and economic reasons for these events.

1.4.2. Composition:

Even though there is consensus in seeing the book of Kings as finally edited by the Deuteronomistic historians, there is still some debate in tracing the history behind the composition of 1 Kings 12.1-20. Some authors have said that the text shows the editorial work of authors from the Northern and the Southern kingdoms. John Gray, for example, deals with two possibilities, saying that although verse20 shows that the text reflects Northern sources, the account "which introduces

Jeroboam at Sechem before the rejection of Rehoboam, is of Judean origin…" (Gray 1964: 279). This author goes on to say that it does not matter that the "tone of the material is critical of Rehoboam", since this would not exclude a Judean source, using as an example the Succession narrative, which he considers as a Judean text critical of David (Gray 1964: 279). In terms of authorship, Gray recognizes that although authors like Van de Born have suggested a prophetic tradition reflected in the story through the Israelites' portrayal, "state records cannot be ruled out" (Gray 1964: 279-280). Long agrees with Gray in perceiving influences of the Northern and Southern courts in the narrative. The author mentions that the interest in Rehoboam's role in the dissolution of the Solomonic kingdom "could have been shared equally by persons Israelite or Judahite…" (Long 1984: 136-137). This means he thinks of both options as influential in the composition of the text, although he claims that the fact that God plays a role in the situation suggests a Judahite perspective (Long 1984: 136-137). In addition, Long is not sure about the group that could have composed the text, proposing that its characteristics fit a composition "inside and outside official royal circles (Long 1984: 137). This ambiguity is important, especially when taking into account that the narrative does not seem interested in rejecting the monarchy as an institution, but only the one related to the house of David, which has played an important role exploiting the population. In terms of the time of composition, authors like Gray propose that the usage of the phrase "To this day" in 1 Kings 12.19b shows that this specific passage could have had its origin "before the final liquidation of the Northern kingdom with the fall of Samaria in 721" (Gray 1984: 284). If so, it would then match texts like Genesis 47.13-26, the Joseph story and 1 Samuel 8.11-18, in reflecting the monarchic era and the abuses it practiced on the population.

What is clear, is that the story was not written at once. Like other texts it underwent a process of growth. Long suggests that verses 17-20 were added to the main corpus of the text comprised by verses 1-16 (Long 1984: 134). Gray also sees a complex process of composition in relation to Jeroboam. He proposes that verses 2, 3 and 4, which mention the future Israelite king, show the different sources from the Southern and Northern kingdoms that were incorporated in the text (Gray 1964: 278). In terms of the literary context of the text, Cogan indicates how 1 Kings 12.1-20 "…is tied to the preceding Ahijah prophecy (11. 29-39) by the editorial verse15, emphasising that Yahweh is behind the scenes in the management of the affairs of men" (Cogan 2000: 351). Therefore, the story is better understood when read within this tradition.

Finally, in terms of the sources used, Gray mentions that the presence of Jeroboam in the text implies the usage of Northern and Southern kingship annals (Gray 1964: 278). Long also highlights that 1 Kings 12.1-20 deals with "Division of loyalties and establishment of rival claimants to rule", which in his opinion are frequent motifs of the Old Testament (Long 1984: 136). In addition, he sees also

influence of extra-Israelite material in the composition of the text, comparing the scenes between Rehoboam and his counsellors with the Gilgamesh poem. Long states that "The Sumerian Poem Gilgamesh and Aggada "contains a scene of the impetuous young ruler (Gilgamesh) seeking and rejecting the moderate advice of the city elders in favour of the rash counsel of his young arms bearers" (Long 1984: 136). This interesting connection will be useful for seeing the complexity behind the construction of 1 Kings 12.1-20, and how his author has used different type of material to construct his narrative.

1.4.3. Socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects:

In the context I have just described, a few things can be highlighted in connection with socio-economic and ideo-theological issues. The story clearly talks about power conflicts in the court, where not only the rule of the king but also the legitimation of his courtiers is being challenged. For Cogan, the story is a clear critique against Rehoboam (Cogan 2000: 279), who is portrayed as a caricature in the story (Long 1984: 137). In that sense, I have already said, the text is a resistance to the monarchy represented by Rehoboam. God's participation in the division of the kingdoms is also highlighted (Long 1984: 137; Cogan 2000: 351), suggesting that the divinity rejects the exploitation of the Davidic monarchy and promotes a different organization, based in the monarchy but with the hope that it is not based on oppression. The intention of the story is to challenge the current kingship due to its economic abuses and promote a different one, legitimating the "rebellion" in the name of God.

With this brief description, it can be said that 1 Kings 12.1-20 appears to be a text that shows movements of resistance against socio-economic exploitation, movements supported and guided by the God of the Israelites and his prophet.

2. The temple-state system in monarchic Israel: From pre-monarchic times to the divided Monarchy

Before moving on to connect the socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 with those in Genesis 47.13-26, it is important to identify in the texts, at least generally, the presence of the monarchy and its temple-state system in Israel and Judah. Even though Solomon has been traditionally connected to the fullest development of this system, the questions around the extension of his kingdom and the enterprises he was able to assume make it necessary to consider the exploitative mechanism of the monarchy and the tributary system as present

in other periods of time[80]. In addition, the socio-economic and ideo-theological differences between pre-monarchic and monarchic Israel, the role played by foreign empires in these differences, and the continuity that the divided monarchy gave to the tributary system introduced by the united kingdom, need to be taken into consideration for the understanding I propose of 1 Samuel 8.11-18, 1 Kings 12.1-20, and Genesis 47.13-26. Due to this, the section deals only with those elements that play an important role in the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects of Ancient Israel. I discuss the distance between the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects in Israel and the foreign empires and city-states, then mention the socio-economic and ideo-theological possibilities of Solomonic monarchy, and finally, give some examples of the application of the tributary system during the divided monarchy. This overview allows an understanding of the socio-economic and ideo-theological projects in Israel before, in and after the United Monarchy, and the influence of the foreign empires and city-states in them, with the purpose of covering all the different contexts that can be reflected in the stories studied here.

2.1 City-State system and Egalitarian society in Ancient Israel:

1 Samuel 8.11-18 is a text that contributes to understanding the transition of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects in Israel. By narrating a shift in Israel's social organization, the text becomes an instrument not only for contrasting the "old" model and the "new" model in Israel, but also by associating the latter one negatively to the model implemented in the other nations. In 1 Samuel 11-18, the narrative tone in which this transition is recorded is one of contestation. In addition, the resistance narrated here can help us identify not only the type of socio-economic and ideo-theological projects that reigned in "the other nations", but also the way pre-monarchic Israel organized itself in order to construct a different society.

Ancient Near East Empires and Canaanite city-states had a socio-economic organization and ideo-theological structure very similar to the one that the united monarchy introduced in Israel. Many scholars call this the "tributary mode of production" (See Gottwald 1985; Chaney 1986; Houston 2006). Houston, citing Melotti, states that this system was characterized by three main elements. First, the rulers would have had a claim on the entire territory and there would be no distinction between tax and rent (Houston 2006: 34). Second, the village communities would have been obligated to "hand over surpluses to state representatives in the form of tax-rents in kind or cash or in labour on state projects" (Houston 2006: 34). Third, there would have been a centralization of power to facilitate the exploiting

[80] See for example Ben Zvi's datation of Micah 2.1-2 denunciation of landgrabbing (Houston 2004: 132-133). He argues that the mention of such problem does not offer enough ground to date Micah's composition in the eighth century BCE since land grabbing was present in practically in every age.

class belonging to a state bureaucracy, to "live off the labour of the peasants" (Houston 2006: 34). Furthermore, in this model, religion would have played an important part, sanctioning the right of the rulers to possess fields, impose corvée and take the produce of the peasantry, in a dynamic Boer (2007: 29, 39) has called "sacred economy", described in the next section.

As I described in Chapter One, Canaanite societies were characterized by this oppressive socio-economic model where rulers extracted the resources of the population through different mechanisms. As Gottwald points out, "Canaan had been dominated by city-states with hierarchies of warriors and bureaucrats who took over the agricultural surplus of the villages…" (Gottwald 1985: 272). Another aspect of these societies was their social stratification where the centres of power, usually in cities with palaces and temples, had the control of the totality of the production of the villagers. This model was issued to impose on peasantry "heavy burdens of taxation in kind, forced labour and military service" (Gottwald 1985: 272-273; see also Chaney 1986: 60-61). Horsley, in agreement with Gottwald in the description of these oppressive dynamics, mentions that the villages "supported temple towns and cities with taxes, tithes and offerings" (Horsley 2009: 3). Moreover, Mendelsohn (1956: 20-21),, in his earlier study of 1 Samuel 8.11-18, had already mentioned how Canaanite rulers imposed forced labour and a variety of taxes on the population oppressive measures that characterized the tributary system in this land. Burdens of this kind were imposed by local rulers or imperial forces (Gottwald 1985: 273), demonstrating that this economic and ideo-theological model related to the tributary system worked for both local and foreign elites. The system, therefore, had a doubly oppressive mechanism against the population. Adding to that the burdens of the temple, Horsley points out that kings claimed taxes, temples tithes, and imperial rulers tribute in a three-way extraction that maintained its fundamental economic structure, even when centres of power were altered (Horsley 2009: 3). This tributary system was common in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, and later, in Babylon (Horsley 2009: 9-11; Wittenberg 2007: 6-7). It was a tool used by the rulers to increase their wealth through the impoverishment and exploitation of the majority of the population.

This pressure eroded the life of the peasantry in the villages, making many of them ask for loans in order to pay to their political and religious rulers. The court's officers, a new class that originated due to the tributary system and in service of the king, took advantage by practicing money lending at very high interest allowing them to take the peasant's lands destined to grow crops for trade and export, due to debts (Horsley 2009: 5, 7-8). Most of the population, after losing their ancestral lands, would have become tenant farmers and day labourers, whose production would be used to pay for warfare and the luxurious life of the ruling classes (Gottwald 1985: 27).

According to Horsley, explaining the reasons that the peasantry endured this inequality and oppression, maintains that "two dominating factors…made the Ancient Near Eastern economy work…" coercion and religion (Horsley 2009: 9). Horsley describes how the rulers organized military or strong arms to "encourage the peasants to pay their taxes and tithes" (Horsley 2009:9-10), but also highlights the role played by the temple and its religious system to dominate the peasantry socio-economically and ideo-theologically. He explains how the temple and its tithes were presented as instruments used to please the gods in charge of the natural forces (Horsley 2009: 10-11). Failing to please these Gods could provoke their anger, and consequently, natural disasters that would affect the crops and collapse the socio-economic organization (Horsley 2009: 11). The temple's theology promoted a discourse that put rulers and priests as God's vicars, made taxes and tithes sacred obligations and forced labour a service given to the patron-Gods of the land (Horsley 2009: 11-12; see also Wittenberg 2007: 6-7). This religious system would have given the priestly classes the opportunity to subordinate the peasants through the temples, and therefore to claim for themselves a portion of the produce and labour (Horsley 2009: 8). Of course, the priestly classes cannot not be separated from the kings and rulers, who were usually considered divine and also played religious roles (Horsley 2009: 3; Wittenberg 2007: 6). The temple and its theology were necessary for the tributary system in the Canaanite city-state and ANE imperialistic projects. Although it was put aside in the pre-monarchic period, it later found its place at the beginning of the Israelite monarchy. This religious institution, together with the tributary system, played an important role in the deprived living conditions of peasants in Canaanite city-states, and even though such models were rejected in pre-monarchic Israel, they soon found their way into the system through the rise of the monarchy.

According to different authors, pre-monarchic Israel can be considered a socio-economic and ideo-theological organization that emerged in contrast to the Canaanite city-state and the diverse imperialistic projects of the time. Gottwald (1993: 39) has been the most famous defender of this position, stating that ancient Israel emerged as a "combined socio-political and religious movement…aimed at creating an alternative society of independent farmers, pastoral nomads, artisans and priestly intellectuals who were free from the political domination and interference of the hierarchic city-states that held the upper hand in Canaan". This author, then, suggests that pre-monarchic Israel constructed a society independent from the centres of power and control represented by the city-state in Canaan, thereby becoming an alternative model to the tributary system and temple institution. He highlights the different type of social, economic, political and religious groups that were organized to resist the control of the city-states and to be independent of their sphere of domination. One of the main contrasts between these two societies was the hierarchic social order promoted in Canaan in contrast

to the more egalitarian peasant society that Israelites wanted to bring into existence (Gottwald 1993: 39). In this pre-monarchic Israel "…there were no large buildings, much less palaces, storehouses, or temples", suggesting that "there was little stratification, no significant differences in economic resources and social standing" (Horsley 2009: 34).

The lack of centralized institutions and centres of extraction might have promoted, without idealizing, a much more equal society that seems to have represented a breakage with the "city-state organization in favour of re-tribalization (Gottwald 1993: 44). It showed that city-state and countryside were mutually exclusive systems, and that the ethos of these tribes "conveyed in principle a fundamental aversion to the state" (Coote 1990: 76). Gottwald (1979: 468) states that in order to exist, the city "must inevitably impose demands upon the countryside which threaten the very means of subsistence of farmers and herdsmen". The countryside inhabitants would have seen how dangerous it was for their survival to fall under the control of the state and its system. The necessity to keep the rulers and the hierarchic organization led them, according to Gottwald, to "expropriate a large part of the surplus of rural producers… (and) recruit the rural population for building projects and its armies…" (Gottwald 1979: 468). The system not only impoverished the population and took their resources for the maintenance of an elite, but also interrupted the work in the land by taking peasants to fight for the king and to work in his building projects. The city, then, would clearly represent an "obstacle to countryside systems and its vital interests in autonomous production, distribution and consumption" (Gottwald 1979: 468).

The Israelite's pre-monarchic organization would have responded with a different model. Based on the cult of Yahweh, it developed "a set of similar egalitarian social relations…" (Gottwald 1979: 489). These had the intention to "inhibit social stratification" and promoted the "prohibition against sale of land outside the family, prohibition of interest on loans, limitation of debt-servitude, periodic redistribution of land holdings, and obligations of mutual economic aid to prevent the destitution or demise of extended families" (Gottwald 1979: 613). This description allows us to see how different the programmes of the Canaanite city-states and pre-monarchic Israel were. As described before, the tributary system and its socio-economic pressures promoted the selling of land, high-interest loans, and slavery and debt servitude, among others. The pre-monarchic Israel, basing their new organization on the worship of Yahweh (Gottwald 1979: 489), would have established laws protecting the ancestral land of the peasants and restricting its sale, banning the abuse of those in economic disgrace by rejecting interests in money lending, and also warning against perpetual slavery. With these prohibitions, Ancient Israel would stand in clear opposition with the common practices of the tributary system in the Canaanite city-states and foreign empires as a way to avoid the growth of social inequalities and the chaos that they

bring to the majority of the population. Its organization "not only…challenge(s) Egyptian imperialism; it rejects city-state feudalism as well…" (Gottwald 1979: 489).

Having no centralized state was another difference between pre-monarchic Israelites and most of the "other nations". Peasant families in the villages produced for their own consumption, being free to eat what they harvested instead of paying taxes and tithes or giving to a monarch or moneylender (Gottwald 1985: 286; Horsley 2009: 38). In that way, they would have kept their independence and not risked losing their lands due to debt. In what can be considered an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time, free Israelites would have raised their own military forces to defend themselves from external threats (Gottwald 1985: 285). They gathered to organize and defend their land and independence when needed in a covenant of mutual protection (Gottwald 1985: 286). Not having a national army in the service of the rulers would have avoided the military forces abusing peasants and families and forcing them to pay taxes to kings. However, it would imply that the inhabitants of the rural areas would have to be working the land one day and battling in the field on the other, which would have distorted the social organization and placed a burden on the peasants. The absence of the temple and a centralized, official cult would have allowed Israelites to avoid paying tithes and being recruited for forced labour, realities that represented a heavy burden, not only in Canaanite city-states, but also in monarchic Israel. The resources, however, would have been used for cultural-religious obligations within the community, such as helping those in economic distress and also assisting the most vulnerable of the society, such as widows, orphans and foreigners (Gottwald 1985: 285, 287; Horsley 2009: 39-40).

The religious dimension would not have been used in the abusive way that it was in the temple-state system. According to Gottwald (1993: 46), "Canaanite religion was definitively committed to legitimating the history of "hierarchic" city-states…while Israel fully appropriated "nature" as the proper domain of free peasants awarded by their fully accredited and awarded new deity" (Gottwald 1993: 46). From this, we can understand the roles played by the religious realm in the socio-economic and ideological projects of city-state and pre-monarchic Israel. In pre-monarchic Israel, Yahwism would, indeed, have determined behaviours and required certain actions from those that formed part of the "liberated" population (Horsley 2009: 38-49). The socio-economic organization and the ideo-theological dimension, in other words Yahwism and egalitarianism, were so intimately related to each other that any alteration in one of them would strictly promote an alteration in the other (Gottwald 1979: 611-612).

Although corruption could have arisen in this society, as 1 Samuel 8 shows, the reality was that without the oppression and exploitation of the monarchy and the tributary system, pre-monarchic Israel would have lived a more independent and socio-economically liberated existence than that of those

under Canaanite city states and monarchic Israel. The end of this revolutionary moment, where Israel was able to live outside of the dominion of a centralized power and the tributary system, seems to be recorded by the text of 1 Samuel 8, which appears to remember the catastrophic consequences of the transition from the egalitarian to the Imperialistic and Canaanite city-state system.

2.2 The Solomonic Monarchy:

Israel moves from a "tribal" to a monarchic system in a slow process. 1 Samuel 8 records the beginning of this shift, which ended with the election of Saul in 1 Samuel 9-10 as king over a few areas of the land. Even though there is a first change here economically and politically, the establishment of the city-state model in full came, according to the biblical account, with the advent of Solomon. With his temple and a fully established court, including an army, Solomon exercised more control over the population and extracted tribute from them in a heavier and more systematic way. The end of the tribal system and the establishment of a full state organization has been understood as a product of different factors. Dreher (1997), for example, points out how changes in agricultural technology allowed certain sectors of the population to plant more and therefore harvest in greater quantity, having as a result a bigger income. This author maintains that "…the technological revolution (was) represented by the introduction of the ox as a plough animal…" (Dreher 1997: 25), which contributed to the existence of "a level of production exceeding the needs of the community…" (Dreher 1997: 25). This could have triggered changes in socio-economic relations, provoking the emergence of wealthier and more powerful families that would eventually end up taking control over others. For example, warrior elites that became specialized in activities related to war (Dreher 1997: 25). Another factor was international politics, since the leadership of a king would have been required for "an efficient defence against the Philistines" (Dreher 1997: 25).

Even though these reasons are part of the construction of a new stratified society and also mark the end of the more egalitarian organization[81], the temple is one of the key institutions in the tributary mode of production of the Canaanite city-state system. Solomon is the one attributed with the implementation of a state religion. In Chapter One of this thesis I have described how such religious and ideological systems operated in the socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects. Without repeating the description here, I deal with the question of the possibility that the tributary system was fully implemented by Solomon and his court. This element is important because of two things: The impact of Solomon's actions; and the "credibility" of the biblical texts that recorded them have been put

[81] See Houston (2004: 134-135). This author, citing the work of S. Bendor, describes how stratification and economic injustice were not the product of the monarchy in Ancient Israel, but a fenomenom present before and during such instutition, promoted by local chiefs and not necessarily only by governmental officials.

into question. This means that in order to claim that texts like Genesis 47.13-26, the Joseph story, 1 Samuel 8.11-18, and 1 Kings 12.1-20 reflect the context of this king, the existence of this contextual reality must be carefully studied. The socio-economic pressure Israel suffered during Solomon's rule might not have been as heavy as was thought, and instead belong to a legendary aspect or a reflection of an earlier period of time in Israel's history. In addition, the questions around the magnitude of Solomon´s rule invite the reader to pay attention to the application of the tributary system in the times of the divided monarchy. As I argued earlier, Genesis 47.13-26, the Joseph story, 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-12 all critique the exploitation of the temple-city complex in Israel, which could be evoking contexts after the rule of Solomon. This becomes important to understand a socio-economic and ideo-theological model that was implemented in Israel during the whole period of the monarchy, probably until Roman times (West 2011: 513-514).

Through most of the 20th century, most biblical scholars working on Israel's history and the united monarchy have found in the archaeological work enough support to claim that the biblical accounts about Solomon could have happened. Hauer (1980) and Whitelam (1986), for example, cite the work of biblical archaeologists, like Aharoni and his findings in Hazor and Meggido, to support their work on the united monarchy and Solomon's rule. For them both archaeology (Hauer 1980: 63-64; Whitelam 1986: 169-170) has provided the resources not only to prove the historicity of biblical accounts in 1 Kings 3-11, but also to develop theories about Israel's history on those bases. Therefore, archaeology today can offer important insights in the study of Solomon's reign and especially in regards to the establishment of the city-state model and tributary system in Israel.

In his work about the monarchy in Israel and Judah, Israel Finkelstein (1999: 36) has concluded that here is "an archaeological "dark age" of over four centuries…which covers most of the Iron Age I, the days of the united monarchy, and the entire history of the northern Kingdom of Israel." For this author, therefore, it is very difficult to find material that can support the biblical account around this period of time. He has acknowledged the necessity to revise the work of Aharoni and others, highlighting that the new archaeological findings in Meggido, for example, have become weak and cannot be related anymore with the Solomonic monarchy (Finkelstein 1999: 36-37). In this regard, Finkelstein (1999: 38-39) points out that the strata widely regarded as belonging to the Solomonic city has to be moved into the early ninth century BCE. This no longer matches the possible period when this king ruled in Israel. For this author, in the time of Solomonic rule in the tenth century BCE, Jerusalem "was a small, poor, unassuming highland stronghold, not very different from other hill country mounds" (Finkelstein 1999: 40). This description disagrees with the biblical account about Solomon's monarchy. The state was not as wide spread as it seemed to be, and the biblical account would only

become a reality around two centuries later, since for Finkelstein "evidence for developed statehood in Judah cannot be found before the 8th century BCE" (Finkelstein 1999: 39). This difficulty in finding information about Solomon's rule, and especially in placing a fully developed organization in the style of the Canaanite temple-city system at this time, needs to be taken into account when attempting to reconstruct the implementation and consequences of the tributary system in Israel-Judah.

Mario Liverani agrees with Finkelstein regarding the difficulties of finding information about Solomon's rule. He recognizes the conflict between the traditional chronology, which attributes the construction of Hazor and Meggido to Solomon, and the one of Finkelstein, who places the construction of such cities in the time of the Omrids (Liverani 2005: 116). For this author, there is nothing monumental related to Solomon, whose reign is described as modest and in the transition from Iron Age I and II (Liverani 2005: 116). Liverani analyses the texts about Solomon and finds there the echoes of a time far away from the one of the tenth century, the age when David's heir would have reigned in Israel. In discussing the extension of Solomon's kingdom as narrated in 1 Kings 5, Liverani (2005: 115) maintains that this text is a later manipulation that describes the extension of the Transeufratine Satrapy[82] and which represents the dream of the author to see his country at the same level as international potencies. In addition, he argues that there is no evidence that any Jerusalemite dynasty extended political and administrative control over the Northern regions (Liverani 2005: 116). In his opinion, the attribution to Solomon of the dominion of the North reflected the political project of Josiah in the seventh century BCE, whose intentions may have been to control the Northern territories of Israel as part of his expansionist plans (Liverani 2005: 117). Liverani, therefore, sees no connection between what is narrated in the biblical texts about Solomon nor any historical possibilities of connection to the tenth century BCE, but does find echoes of later times in the narratives about this king. As a result, he proposes that the stories are reflections of the past of other monarchies. He thinks that much biblical information about Solomon, such as his marriage with an Egyptian princess and the use of Gezer as dowry, are clearly late and have no strong evidence to support them (Liverani 2005: 116). Liverani also engages with the socio-economic and ideo-theological aspects of Solomon's monarchy. He thinks that the stories around Solomon's commercial enterprises are novelistic and mentions that the supposed port built by this king only shows evidence of settlements from the eighth century BCE (Liverani 2005: 119), two centuries after Solomon's rule. Besides this, the author also discusses the impossibility of constructing the temple supposedly built by Solomon in a city like Jerusalem in the tenth century BCE. For Liverani (2005: 118), the dimensions of the temple and the royal palace, as described in 1 Kings 6-9, exceed the space available in the little Jerusalem that the archaeology has reconstructed for that

[82] Term used to define the place of Judah in the Persian Period (Liverani 2005: 345).

time. Instead, he argues, the text reflects the enterprises of the Persian period, projected to the past to the time of Solomon, to give them a foundational value (Liverani 2005: 119). Agreeing with Finkelstein, Liverani maintains that there is little evidence that can support the information about Solomon's rule in the Bible, pointing out that most of the texts that talk about this king are reflecting a much later period of time.

In his work around the history of Israel, Alberto Soggin has mentioned how evidence "in terms of archaeology is…deceptively scarce" (Soggin 1993: 71). He points out that "no discovery has been made in Jerusalem which can be dated with a minimum of certainty to the time of David and Solomon" (Soggin 1993: 72). Due to the lack of sources available, Soggin (1993: 70) mentions that "it is not surprising that the figure of Solomon is sometimes thought to be purely fictitious, perhaps a mythical monarch from a happy past". In addition, he argues that Solomon is mentioned in the texts because the construction of the temple is attributed to him and also because his wisdom became proverbial (Soggin 1993: 74). Furthermore, these words are helpful to make sense of the archaeological findings around Solomon's monarchy.

The figure of a historical Solomon is difficult to find in the texts due to the different literary layers and re-elaborations in the texts about him (Liverani 2005: 115). Therefore, it may be useful to pay attention to authors who have understood the texts about this monarch as literary creations that idealize the past for exalting a later monarchy by the evocation to one of the founders of the dynasty. Authors like Jobling, for example, highlight the idealized construction of the texts about Solomon, arguing that "…the account of Solomon's reign belongs to the genre of narratives which tell of a past Golden Age, and a subsequent "fall"" (Jobling 1991: 58). For this author, "what the text represents is the *historical necessity of its production…"* (Jobling 1991: 59). Therefore, he suggests that such stories, rather than being an attempt to reconstruct historical events, had an ideological intention and Solomon functions as an emblematic figure. Thus, he claims that:

> "…the Deuteronomistic text imposes an ahistorical framework on an existing monarchical ideology, for which Solomon was a unique emblem, and which was in essence and origin ahistorical" (Jobling 1991: 60).

Solomon's importance, then, is centred on his legendary image. Therefore, the historical possibilities of his person and his actions seem to lose importance in the biblical records. Talking about the origin of 1 Kings 6-7, Van Seters mentions the composition of texts and how they are used to promote a positive image of rulers. This author maintains that "the whole point of the royal kingship inscriptions is that the king should get credit for all his labours on behalf of the gods and for the rich

gifts to the temple" (Van Seters 1997: 50). In the case of Solomon, he argues that 1 Kings 6-7 corresponds not to what could have happened in Solomon's rule, but instead to an "ideological embellishment to enhance the time of Solomon" (Van Seters 1997: 56). This account would have been composed by a Deuteronomistic historian "looking back to the beginning of an era" (Van Seters 1997: 55). This situation would contribute to the consideration of the narratives about the Solomonic monarchy in a more idealized way. In this, Finkelstein highlights the work of Van Seters, Garbini and others, and their opinion of the "golden age". He mentions how they argue that "the stories of David and Solomon draw a picture of an idyllic golden age, and that the description of Solomon's time is wrapped in later theological and ideological goals, and that the Deuteronomistic account of Solomon's reign is based on very little original material" (Finkelstein 1999: 36). This author, then, points out the scarce information about the united monarchy and the important role that theological and ideological aspects play in the records of kings like Solomon for those who write them.

The information discussed here has contributed to expanding my approach to the socio-economic and ideo-theological dimensions of the Solomonic monarchy and its implementation of the tributary system. However, the archaeological information that is available has not been able to provide convincing information about Solomon's rule. Therefore, the text is the only resource we have to imagine the socio-economic pressures and ideo-theological domination that this monarchy imposed on the Israelite population. However, it also needs to be taken into account that much of the information in the accounts about Solomon reflect other periods of time with their ideological and theological viewpoint. They have transformed this king into an idealized and legendary figure. What has been discussed here can be used cautiously to speak about Solomon and his socio-economic and ideo-theological measures. Also to consider whether the actions attributed to him, such as corvée, temple exploitation, and religious manipulation, could have been present in Israel in later years. As a result, I consider it important to review the presence of the temple-state system after the Solomonic period, as a way of tracing the implementation of the Canaanite city-state model in Israel-Judah and the consequences this had on the population, events that could have been projected to the past in the accounts about Solomon.

2.3 The temple-state tributary system in the divided Monarchy:

1 Kings 12 records the rebellion against the Davidic house due to socio-economic exploitation. Solomon had imposed a heavy yoke on the backs of the Israelites, and the people decided to reject the rule of the Davidic kings and their oppressive actions. However, their rebellion led to them instituting a monarchy that ended up applying the same socio-economic and ideo-theological measures as their predecessors: the tributary system. In this section, the goal is to describe the implementation of the

temple-state system in the divided monarchy as a way of showing how important this period is in the search for the possible context of composition of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, including Genesis 47.13-26.

The presence of the temple-state system in Israel can be traced from the time of the divided monarchy to the Persian period. Jeroboam I, who was elected to become king after the Northern tribes who rejected Rehoboam due to economic exploitation, followed the same ways of Solomon, developing building projects that represented a burden to the people. Coote and Coote (1990: 40) highlight this, pointing out how Jeroboam "himself undertook a royal building program, requiring corvée labour…in Shechem and Penuel, then moved his capital to Tirzah, his Jerusalem, just northeast of Shechem". It seems that he balanced the power relations by "conceding authority to tribal magnates, restoring the village militia, protecting villagers' legal rights against the magnates, and representing tribal custom" (Coote and Coote 1990: 40). In addition, he continued imposing the yoke on the Israelites and also used religion to legitimize his rule. Even though he did not build a temple (Coote and Coote 1990: 41), religion was an important part of his political project especially in front of Judah's kingdom.

The Omrid's[83] intensified the oppression on the Northern tribes, acting in a way that resembles Solomon's monarchy. This can be seen, for example, in Omri's work in his capital city, Samaria. According to Coote and Coote (1990: 43), "by heavy exaction of corvée labor, Omri fortified a new city, Samaria, as his new Jerusalem". This represented a repetition of what Israelites had suffered under Solomon. In addition, the military force sustained by the Omrid's was a heavy burden on the backs of the Northern tribes:

> "The Omrids…build up an imposing military force at the expense once again of the villages. Ahab commanded an army one and a half as large as Solomon's, supported on a territorial and population base perhaps as half as large. To maintain this army, the royal household expanded its control over more and more of Israel's economy, impoverishing the villages and manipulating trade" (Coote and Coote 1990: 43-44).

In the opinion of Coote and Coote (1990: 44), the time of the Omrids represented a higher level of economic exploitation in comparison with that of Solomon. In order to fulfil their trading project and maintain their army, "…the royal household undertook to rationalize agriculture in order to maximize its intake, over the workers' dead bodies" (Coote and Coote 1990: 44). These authors narrate how the lowlands were taken for large-scale cultivation of wheat, oil and grapes, and also to raise livestock for the court, temple and army (Coote and Coote 1990: 44). The rule of these kings also represented a

[83] Heirs of Jeroboam I (Conff. 1 Kings 16.21-22.40).

time of loss of the land by the peasantry, who saw their ancestral land taken away due to foreclosure of debts and selling themselves to become debt slaves (Coote and Coote 1990: 44). This description of the socio-economic dynamics in the time of the Omrids, seems very close to what is described about Solomon. This contributes to an understanding that, after the united monarchy, the exploitation of the peasantry through taxes and corvée was present, and the loss of land and debt-slavery was still part of their reality.

The eighth century is also well known from the way the temple-state system exploited the peasantry in Israel and Judah. Marvin Chaney describes the political economy in Israel and Judah in the eighth century BCE as reflected in the books of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and specially Micah (Chaney 2006: 145). According to this author, it was the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (781-745 BCE) and Uzziah of Judah (781-747 BCE) when "the elites of the two state an unusual freedom to initiate change in their political economics" (Chaney 2006: 146; see also Coote and Coote 1990: 48). Chaney sees trade as the centre of the economic enterprise of the elites and as the reason for the economic pressure experienced by the peasantry:

> "Elites participated in international trade through the maritime city-states of Phoenicia. Luxury goods, military materiel, and the wherewithal of monumental architecture were imported. To pay for these imports, foodstuffs and fiber were exported. Wheat, olive oil, and wine, the triad of Palestinian agriculture, headed the list of exports…costs and benefits of this trade were disproportionate…Imports benefited the elites few, but their cost in exported foodstuffs cut deeply into the sustenance of the peasant majority" (Chaney 2006: 146-147).

Wheat, olive oil and wine took over the priorities of agricultural production. According to Chaney (1993: 252), "wine and oil were central to the increasingly consumptive lifestyle of the local elite…were more valuable (and) …made ideal exports to exchange for the luxury and strategic imports coveted by members of the ruling classes." The specialization required for trade made the elites take control of the production from the peasantry, not only to dictate what peasants should grow on their fields, but also even taking their land, leaving the masses with no power to decide what to plant in order to guarantee their subsistence. This idea is mentioned by Chaney (2006: 148), who argues that "…urban elites reduced or usurped villagers' power to make their own decisions regarding the priorities and techniques of agricultural production…the few preferred crops concentrated risk and effaced the risk-spreading mechanisms of the peasants' more traditional subsistence agriculture." The people lost their rights to control the land, and with that their possibility to guarantee their survival, which was now in the hands of the rulers. This was achieved through a tax policy, which discouraged the peasantry from growing for subsistence and instead made them engage in the cultivation of grapes and olives

(Chaney 2006: 148), two of the products used by the elites for export. Issues of taxation led to the need for asking for loans, which represented another way of extraction from the peasantry by the elites.

According to Chaney (2006: 148), the failure to pay loans and their interests provoked the "foreclosure on family land and/or the indentured labour of family members pledged as collateral". This last element was something that "was often at the discretion of the wealthy urban creditors". Through debt the rulers were not only able to achieve land consolidation, but also foment the pauperization of the peasantry (Chaney 2006: 148). Foreclosure was used to form larger states where "subsistence for peasant families were combined into large and efficient vineyards and olive orchards producing a single crop for market" (Chaney 1993: 251). Those would be in the control of the rulers, impacting the old system of freehold that "…provided this peasant majority secure access to a modest but adequate and integrated living" (Chaney 1993: 252). This new system would therefore complicate the living conditions of the majority, who worked the land only according to "the cyclical demands of viticulture and orcharding and at wages of day labor…" Chaney 1993: 252).

In relation to the economic conditions of Israel and Judah in the eighth century, Itumeleng Mosala (1989) highlights how the rulers used corvée as a way to exploit the population. Citing Premnath, Mosala (1989: 112) mentions that "The building of palatial mansions, storage silos and administrative centres under Jeroboam II implies the usage of a large labour force." Building projects, then, continued to be a way for extracting revenue from the population. Mosala, in the words of Premnath, says that "…it is not possible to conceive how else such projects could have been carried out except by the imposition of corvée" (Mosala 1989: 112).

Authors like Chaney, Mosala, and Robert and Mary Coote, all identify, in the eighth century BCE, an increase in the socio-economic exploitation of the peasantry by the rulers and new elites. Agreeing with Chaney, Coote and Coote mention the agricultural specialization promoted by Jeroboam II and Uzziah, which "destroyed the diversification of agriculture upon which villages in the higher lands depended for livelihood" (Coote and Coote 1990: 48). The elites made the peasantry assume this specialization through "heavy taxation on grain", which impeded farmers' "practice (of) field rotation, fallowing, planting legumes to restore nutrients in the soil, or raising livestock" (Coote and Coote 1990: 48). Loans at high rates became a necessity for peasants due to taxes, and the impossibility of paying their debts made many of them lose their land and become day labourers or debt-slaves (Coote and Coote 1990: 48). Coote and Coote not only mention how the peasantry moved to a less fertile land to produce grain for their subsistence, but also how they suffered economic problems buying grain at one price (in winter) and selling it at a lower one (in spring) to repay their loans (Coote and Coote 1990: 48-

49). This cycle made most of the population face extremely difficult living conditions in opposition to the opulence enjoyed by the elites and rulers.

The final author mentioned in connection to the eighth century BCE is Walter Houston. This author, working on the text of Amos, maintains that those behind the economic exploitation are reflected in the book belonging to "the Metropolitan aristocracy, consisting…of those directly involved in the royal administration together with those wealthy country landowners who had chosen to better themselves by moving to the capital", including royal family and crown officials (Houston 2006: 64). Houston thinks that the actions condemned in the book of Amos could be related "…perhaps (to) taxation, or overdriving the workers on their private estates, or extracting debt payments (with interest) from peasants whose vineyards or whose persons had been distained" (Houston 2006: 66). He mentions these ways of extraction by trying to make sense of the accusation against the women of Samaria, who were crushing the poor and needy (Houston 2006: 66). In his opinion, the only way to get an idea of this "crushing" is to base the assumptions on the "means whereby the Hebrew kingdoms became class societies", which mainly are "taxation, foreclosure and enslavement" (Houston 2006: 66). The author, therefore, agrees with the other scholars mentioned before, seeing taxation, the taking of land, and debt slavery as the main socio-economic issues that affected the Israelites in the eighth century BCE.

The last period I want to engage with, concerning the presence of the temple-state system in Ancient Israel and Judah, is the Persian Era. In the previous periods of time, most of the exploitation came from local courtiers and elites since Israel and Judah were slightly independent of foreign domination, so even though at a certain point there were empires asking for tribute, most of the socio-economic pressure came from inside. In the time of the Persian administration of Judah there is already an external force asking for tribute from the inhabitants of Judah, extraction that needed to be added to the one applied by the local elites. One of the authors who contribute to an analysis of this period from a socio-economic and ideo-theological perspective is Roland Boer. In his study called "The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel" (2007), Boer identifies the conflict between the villages and the city with its temple as one way to understand the economic dimensions not only of the Persian Yehud but also the Ancient World in general (Boer 2007: 29, 36-37). The "sacred economy" proposed by Boer reflects a tension between what he calls "allocation and extraction, or allocative economics and extractive economics (Boer 2007: 39)." To explain allocation, Boer suggests that there is a necessity to understand the function of the deity in the economic realm. He maintains that the gods are responsible for the production outside human control, this since they are considered responsible "…for the fertility of the soil, rains, open wombs and so on" (Boer 2007: 39). Boer continues, proposing that "…the deity is

central to the process of accounting for productive capacities and to the allocation of such producing items…", allocation that takes place through the decisions of those in power (Boer 2007: 39). The sacred economy identified by Boer, then, has its first pillar in the idea that the gods are the ones who own the means of production and who allocate them through their intermediaries, priests and rulers, to the rest of the population. The means of production belongs to the gods and to those they want to give them.

The other face of this system Boer calls "extractive economy", centred in "extracting something from a producer by someone or some group that has not produced it…" (Boer 2007: 39). The two regimes of extraction in Persian Yehud were tribute and trade, and tribute particularly was done by a local state from the peasants and by an empire from subject states (Boer 2007: 39-40). Tribute was exercised through taxes and tithes, and the resistance of the people to these measures is evident in the way they were legitimized by allocative theology (Boer 2007: 43). The deity, therefore, was the one who sanctioned tribute, which was used "…for the sake of the priests and the material structure of religion" (Boer 2007: 43). Again, the deity is the one playing the most important role in the system, not only because it gives the means to produce, but also because it decides what people have to do with what is produced. Boer exemplifies this dynamic clearly:

> Yahweh, Asshur or Marduk chooses a people, allocates them land (more to the tyrant and his apparatchiks and less to others), opens and closes wombs, calls the war machine into action and is responsible for its successes and failures, determines kinship structures and the modes of patron-client relations, and establishes and sanctions the collection of the tribute (tithe) in the temple" (Boer 2007: 43).

Boer's words contribute to the understanding of how important the religious dimension was to the legitimation of tax, tithe and corvée, highlighting the important role of the divinity in the economy of Ancient Israel, in this case the Persian period. The inhabitants of Yehud, then, would live under several means of socio-economic extraction that were exercised by local and foreign rulers and were strongly commanded by the religious system.

Nehemiah 5 is one text that can reflect the socio-economic dynamics of the postexilic period (Houston: 2004: 131). José Severino Croatto, in his work on this text, highlights some of the socio-economic consequences of the system described by Boer. Croatto (1997: 41) mentions how the problems in Nehemiah 5.1-5 suffered by the Jewish community are not due to a foreign force but because of internal oppression between brothers. There is indebtedness created by the king's tax, which has made the people incur debt to pay the imperial tribute (Croatto 1997: 41). In order to repair

the loans, the people of the Jewish community had to hand over "their fields and vineyards" (Croatto 1997: 41). Croatto points out the crisis that reached inhabitants of Yehud, who became tenants and saw family members becoming slaves in order to pay the debts. He states that, "This state of poverty and indebtedness forced families into self-destruction. The debtors had to hand over their sons and daughters as slaves (verse5a)…the family members that became slaves had to work in the fields and vineyards that were already mortgage" (Croatto 1997: 41). Croatto qualifies the situation of the post-exilic Jewish community as "one of differentiated penury" where "persons with large debts…could only hand over their articles of production and their housing, and even had to go to the extreme of giving up their children as slaves to work for others" (Croatto 1997: 42). The system, says this author, "generates poverty and injustice" (Croatto 1997: 42), and reflects the dynamics described by Boer in terms of allocation and extraction.

With the reference to the post-exilic period this section about the socio-economic dynamics of the temple-state system after the United Monarchy concludes. The periods mentioned, which included the ninth, eighth and fifth century, reflect exploitative socio-economic relations. In them, the religious dimensions played an important part as a tool that legitimized the extraction of resources of the peasantry by the rulers. Tax, tithe and corvée labour were commonly used by those in power to increase their wealth, with the masses as the ones exploited by these measures. They also used high-rate loans, which exacerbated the burden on the people and led them to lose their ancestral lands, become tenants, day labourers and debt-slaves. The socio-economic situations described along these periods of time are very similar and therefore need to be considered to attempt to reconstruct the socio-historic context that could be reflected in 1 Samuel 8-11-18, 1 Kings 12.1-20, and Genesis 47.13-26 as an alternative to the highly contested Solomonic period.

3.Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of 1 Samuel 11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20: ridiculing the empire

I have discussed the main literary and socio-historic dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, with an emphasis in their possible socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses. The first seems to be a text that describes the abusive actions of the kings against its subjects in terms of socio-economic matters, while the other gives the reason for the rejection of the Davidic house, which had imposed a heavy yoke on the Israelites. Here a connection is made with these texts and Genesis 47.13-26. The purpose is to see how they contribute to reading the story of Joseph and the Egyptians as a narrative that denounces socio-economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination, and to discuss the extent to which the three texts belong to a tradition that rejects the economic abuses of the rulers.

3.1 Literary connections and disconnections: There are several literary characteristics that allow a connection between the narrations in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 with that of Genesis 47.13-26. The first element deals with characterization. The three narratives clearly portray two groups in conflict, where a few people with the political power abuse and oppress the majority of the population. While in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 the antagonism is between the king and his servants on the one side, and the elders and people of Israel on the other, 1 Kings shows the conflict between the king and his courtiers with the assembly of Israel. The narratives portray two groups linked by an oppressive relationship. Genesis 47.13-26 also reflects this, where there are also two groups that can be clearly identified. Joseph, the Pharaoh and the priests belong to the group of rulers who take advantage of the other group, composed of the people of Egypt. The three texts, then, seem to reflect a debate or conflict between groups related to the rulers and elites and other population who suffer from their domination.

The conflicts reflected in the three texts are basically centred in exploitation, because the narratives portray the powerful as severely oppressing the majorities. In 1 Samuel 8.11-18 the main oppressor is the king. As described earlier, his actions are described with the verb “take”, meaning that he will claim a right to get the resources of the Israelites and use them for his personal benefit, including that of his courtiers and servants. The Israelites will see the best of their animals, lands and fields, produce and children become the king’s property, with no response from God when the exploitation becomes unbearable. 1 Kings 12.1-20 narrates a similar event. The king again, but in this case Solomon, is accused of having imposed a heavy burden on the Israelites. There is not a long description of what the king actually takes from his subjects, as in 1 Samuel 8.11-18, but there is a clear emphasis on the heavy work and forced labour he imposes on them (1 Kings 12.4 and 18), which will take time and resources from the population. The story narrates the division of the monarchy, and clearly blames the king and his abuses for the situation. In the sense of economic exploitation of the population by the rulers, these two narratives are very close to Genesis 47.13-26. Joseph is the one who behaves as the kings of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, taking the resources of the Egyptians, enslaving them and imposing tax on their produce. It could also be said that Genesis 47.13-26 merges the denunciation in Samuel and 1 Kings. As it happens in Samuel, Joseph extracts from the people and makes them slaves. As it happens in 1 Kings, Joseph makes the people work for nothing in Pharaoh’s projects. The three stories, therefore, are connected in their portrayal of the rulers as the cause of oppression and socio-economic chaos experienced by the population.

1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 20.1-12 also relate to Genesis 47.13-26 in exactly what is taken from the people. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and Genesis 47.13-26 share the ways of extraction, both having a

list of what the rulers take from the population. Even though the descriptions are different, they have in common the ruler's action of taking fields, produce and cattle from their subjects, imposing tax on them and making them slaves. The texts even share the words in reference to "asses" (rAmx]) and "slaves" (~ydl(b'[]) in 1 Samuel 8.16-17 and Genesis 47.17, 19, what could suggest a certain dependence of one upon the other. These two texts resemble each other and in a certain way their connection contributes to the argument that the criticism in Genesis 47.13-26 is against the same type of monarchy denounced in 1 Samuel 8.11-18. In terms of 1 Kings 12.1-20, the story narrates how the problem of the people with the king is centred in his imposition of hard labour. That Adoram, described as the "commander of forced levies" in 1 Kings 12.18, is sent by Rehoboam to the Israelites suggests that the people would have to work for the king in his fields or building projects. One connection could be made in this regard with Genesis 47.13-26, especially if we consider the possibility that Joseph moves the people *to the cities* in Genesis 47.21, or makes them Pharaoh's slaves, to work in his fields or in the state's construction enterprises. The three stories, however, show how the rulers take all they can from their subjects, no matter if it is related to possessions or to their work and strength.

On their literary level, the three narratives also present a "cry of suffering" expressed by the people against the conditions imposed by the rulers. 1 Samuel 8.18 mentions how the Israelites will "*cry out against the king whom you have chosen"*, while 1 Kings 12.4 describes how all Israel asks Rehoboam to "*lighten the cruel slavery he (Solomon) imposed on us and the heavy yoke he laid on us…*". Both "voices" of the people show the despair and suffering experienced due to the exploitative measures of the rulers, and the desperation they feel because of living in a situation that seems to be no longer bearable. In Genesis 47.13-26 can be found a similar "cry" from the people in their difficult situation. Genesis 47.15 and 19 records how the people are afraid of perishing due to the economic situation they experience. *"Shall we die before your eyes?"* are the words they express in Joseph's presence, a cry that is in the middle of Joseph's extractive actions, who is the one who has taken money and cattle from the Egyptians and will then take their lands and make them debt-slaves. The three narratives give voice to those who are exploited and oppressed by the rulers, and their voices share the grief and suffering that is the result of the abusive acts of those in power. Interestingly, the three cries are unheard or are responded to contrary to the request by the people. In 1 Samuel 8.18 God says that he will not hear the people's cry, while in 1 Kings 12.1-20 Rehoboam does not listen to the people and instead tries to impose corvée labour. They connect in this sense with Genesis 47.13-26, where Joseph remains silent before the question of the people but ends up enslaving them and imposing them taxation.

I have argued that the three stories reject and denounce the abuse and oppression of the rulers against the population. However, this is not easy to perceive from the literary level. The narrative in 1 Kings 12.1-20 is the clearest one in this respect, narrating the events that lead to a rebellion against the monarchy due to the burden it has put upon the Israelites. I think that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and Genesis 47.13-26 are texts linked to 1 Kings 12.1-20, since by describing the harsh exploitation exercised by the rulers, they could be inviting and legitimizing actions similar to the ones described in 1 Kings.

Finally, I want to discuss the role played by the divinity in the three narratives. In 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 God clearly rejects the actions of the rulers. 1 Samuel tells how Yahweh opposes the intention of the people to have a king, and in 8.18 talks of how the divinity will not respond to the cry of the people when they suffer due to their ruler's oppression. God here clearly opposes the injustice of the king and shows the mistake made by the Israelites. 1 Kings also includes the religious dimension in his narrative. The divinity is mentioned in 12.15 as the one behind the division of the kingdom; this is due to His punishment of Solomon's "idolatry". However, this needs to be considered carefully and emphasize instead the main line of the story that refers to Solomon's exploitation as the cause of the Israelite's rebellion. Genesis 47.13-26, contrary to the other two narratives, does not refer to the divinity in its story. This absence can be considered as a critique of Joseph's unjust actions, especially because before this the Joseph story clearly states that "God was with Joseph" (conff chapter 39 and 41). The omission of "God was with Joseph" in Genesis 47.13-26 could, therefore, be read as a theological discourse connected to the overt rejection by the divinity of the rulers' actions in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20.

With the examples mentioned in this section, it could be argued that there is a literary connection between 1 Samuel 8.11-18, 1 Kings 12.1-20 and Genesis 47.13-26. Their point of view can be difficult to discern, but open to be interpreted as critique and denunciation. The three describe socio-economic exploitation, portray the rulers as oppressive and the people as raising their voices to denounce such actions. Finally, the presence/absence of God in the narratives can be considered a literary tool used by the authors to show how the divinity sides with the oppressed in the socio-economic conflicts they face.

3.2 Socio-historic connections and disconnections:

1 Samuel 8.11-18, 1 Kings 12.1-20 and Genesis 47.13-26 share the fact that they have been related to different historical contexts, which range from the pre-monarchic times to the pre-exilic and exilic periods. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and Genesis 47.13-26 are understood as documents originating during the Solomonic monarchy, although this argument has already been debated and put into question. The

probability is that both are later compositions. This also applies to 1 Kings 12, which seems to share traditions that come from the two reigns in the times of the divided monarchy. The three narratives reflect the dynamics of taxation, tithing and corvée. As I explained in the section two of this chapter, such dynamics can be identified in Israel-Judah from the time of the so-called united monarchy up to the post-exilic period. Therefore, the three stories analysed here could have been composed or edited around those times or reflect their socio-economic situations. In terms of authorship, 1 Samuel and 1 Kings seem to belong to the Deuteronomistic history, while Genesis 47.13-26 has been traditionally connected, again with lots of contestation, to the Yahwistic tradition. However, the three seem to represent groups of power who resist the extractive actions of the kings and rulers. The fact that 1 Samuel 8.11.18 and Genesis 47.13-26 narrate the dispossession of resources like cattle, land, slaves, produce, and other goods, indicates that the ones suffering from the king's oppression belong to a class that is neither of the poor of the land nor of the courtiers and higher elite. Without idealizing the groups behind the narratives, it can be said that they belong to those who resist the abuses of the king and local rulers that are taking their resources, the element that would connect the three narratives. This connection perhaps contributes to an argument that the texts come from the same or similar perspective and therefore may pursue the same interests: entering into conflict with the monarchs and exercising their power in a certain way over the population.

3.3 Socio-economic and Ideo-theological connections and disconnections:

In addition, there are interesting connections between the stories in terms of their socio-economic and ideo-theological discourses. In terms of the socio-economic dimension, it is important to note that the three narratives all describe how the king and those who surround him, like courtiers, counsellors and priests, exploit the population. The socio-economic project represented is clearly being contested and denounced as oppressive, and with the project of the people behind it. Tax, forced labour, and tithing are presented as mechanisms that bring ruin to the people and make them cry for justice. They cause the slavery of the Israelites, a situation that is reiterated in the narratives. The city-state and its tributary system are attributed the cause of the impoverishment and economic chaos experienced by the people. The fact that the oppression by the king is related to the ways of the "foreign nations" is also a way to differentiate between what is external and internal in Israel in terms of socio-economic organization. "Foreign ways" are the ones that allow the rulers to oppress their subjects, and is something that Israel is engaging with when they ask for a king, according to 1 Samuel 8.11-18. Solomon and Joseph are part of this discourse too, since both of them are connected with the type of administration that is common in imperial lands like Egypt. Therefore, the contestation in 1 Samuel 8.11-18, 1 Kings 12.1-20 and Genesis 47.13-26 will not only be against local rulers but also

against the way that foreign empires exercised their power in their conquered lands, showing them as oppressive and non-salvific.

The critique against the rulers and their oppressive ways finds support in the ideo-theological discourse that the stories seem to share. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 portray the divinity as the one that opposes socio-economic exploitation. Electing a king like "the other nations" and rejecting Yahweh will have as a consequence the enslavement of the population, according to 1 Samuel 8.17. In addition, Yahweh is behind the rejection of the Davidic house in 1 Kings 12.15, as a punishment for Solomon's disobedience to God's commands. The way the rulers oppress the population is theologically rejected in the stories and reflects a debate around religious traditions and the socio-economic projects that emanate from them. Even though 1 Samuel 8.11-18 has traditionally been seen as a critic against kingship per se, describing the institution as corrupt by nature, 1 Kings 12 seems not to reject the monarchy itself, but those kings who exercise their power "wrongly" by exploiting the population. Genesis 47.13-26, with its negative portrayal of Joseph's administration, looks for ways in which to de-legitimize the rulers. Taking "the absence of God" in the story it can be argued that the text emphasizes the rhetoric of accusation found in 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 and the rejection by the divinity of the rulers' unjust actions. In his study of 1 Samuel 8, Clements (1974: 406) points out that the story emphasizes that kingship is not necessary for the salvation of the people, an idea that appears to be an important of the Joseph story but is criticized by Genesis 47.13-26. Clements continues saying that the problem of the monarchy is not Yahweh's but the people's (Clements 1974: 406). This could also be said about 1 Kings 12.1-20 and Genesis 47.13-26, where monarchs and rulers bring chaos instead of peace and provision to the population. The critic of the rulers also implies a denunciation of the theology that supports them. The religion linked to the temple and the city is shown to be unable to avoid the ruin of the people, since it sanctions the unjust measures practiced by the rulers. In that way, and especially in the narratives of Samuel and Kings, the religion of the rulers enters into conflict with traditions related to the judges and others centred in more egalitarian organizations and related to the old tradition that reminds about the liberation from servitude in Egypt. The stories, then, could belong to traditions that promoted a religion that saw Yahweh as the promoter of social justice and against the exploitation brought by the monarchy and its temple-state system.

Finally, the ideo-theological position of the narratives, especially of Kings, could have been to incentivize resistance. The reality described by 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and Genesis 47.13-26 was probably the most common one in Ancient Israel and Judah, but still, the desire to emancipate from the abuses of the monarchs and rulers would be present. 1 Kings 12.1-20 clearly portrays how the people might take the chance to rebel and try to construct a new society, and it could be said that an ideo-theological

intension behind 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and Genesis 47.13-26 was to show the people their misery and make them engage in a more direct type of resistance.

3.4 The role of Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20: ridiculing the empire

Genesis 47.13-26, when read along with 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20, could be understood as literature that denounces the oppressive socio-economic measures of the monarchy and its temple-state system. In that sense, this literature could be related to what Wittenberg calls "resistance theology", attacking the monarchy and unveiling its injustice (Wittenberg 2007: 14). The texts, together with Wittenberg's work, reflect an area of Old Testament tradition that challenges the ways of the kings and the theology behind them which reject the ancient traditions about justice and social equality and promote the privileges of the political and religious rulers centred in the temple. Genesis 47.13-26 and its denunciation of the abuse of the rulers and the "failure" of the monarchy and its tributary system to bring salvation to the Israelites can also be found in Kings and Samuel, texts that in the same way show the economic distress of people under the rule of monarchs. The connection that 1 Samuel 8.11-18 makes with the foreign kings and their actions, and the fact that Genesis 47.13-26 has a similar list of extractions as that in Samuel, could be used to say that Genesis 47.13-26 is a challenge to local and also foreign socio-economic measures and theological discourses. I have already described how the monarchy and the tax system, with all the consequences that it caused to people, including the losing of ancestral lands, tenancy and debt-slavery, was common in the Ancient World and its city-state systems. Empires would strongly extract resources from the population through tribute, and usually legitimize their rule as one of pacification and creation of order in the lands conquered. In this case, empires and local rules would grant themselves a "salvific" role or legitimation of their oppressive actions.

What Genesis 47.13-26 shows is that neither the local rulers nor the foreign empires, governing through taxation and temple-based religion, could bring salvation and stability to the people. Instead, the story shows clearly how they are the reason for the loss of ancestral land, the fear for starvation, the imposition of tax, and the oppression through slavery. By challenging the tax system and the temple and religious institution that sanctioned them, and showing them incapable of salvation, Genesis 47.13-26 ridicules the Israelite rulers that put the system into practice, and also the foreign empires they took them from. Thus, to ridicule the local monarchy is to ridicule Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and the other empires around Israel-Judah, which were its models. The internal exploitation reflects a system that oppresses on a greater scale, making the denunciation in Genesis 47.13-26 transcend borders and affect the heart of a system commonly applied in the Ancient World. By ridiculing the local monarchy,

the story ridicules the empires that have been the base of its socio-economic exploitation and ideo-theological domination.

4. Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with texts of the Old Testament tradition that in my consideration contributes to understand Genesis 47.13-26 and its point of view as a text that represents resistance theology. The literary dimensions of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 1-20 engage with socio-economic issues, and their perspective or point of view seems to criticize the abusive economic measures of the rulers, especially the monarchy. In their socio-historic aspect the texts can be understood, as can Genesis 47.13-26, in different contexts and from diverse socio-political groups. However, they seem to reflect a reality characterized by the temple-state system and would, therefore, be responding to the kind of oppression it brought to the Israelites.

Understanding 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 as texts that represent a theology of resistance, I have tried to make a connection between them and Genesis 47.13-26, arguing that these three texts are examples of literature that challenges the legitimating discourses in favour of the monarchy and its tributary system. The work of this chapter has also been concerned with describing the theological arguments where God opposes socio-economic exploitation and where the Israelites are called to resist exploitative measures.

The exegetical work of the thesis finishes here. In the last chapter, I make the appropriation of the text from the perspective of the Costa Rican context. Using the elements of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics and the construction of a prototype of CBS for this same reality, I try to use the ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses found in Genesis 47.13-26 to respond to the socio-economic injustice lived in Costa Rica.

Chapter Four

Doing Contextual Bible Studies to deal with socio-economic injustice in the Costa Rican Context

The aim of this chapter is to propose ways of dialogue between the main ideo-theological and socio-economic elements of Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican context. It is an attempt to deal with socio-economic injustice from a liberating perspective. To do this, I begin by describing the socio-economic reality of the Costa Rican context, emphasizing the introduction of neoliberalism in the economy of the country, its legitimating dynamics and its impact in the social and economic life of the people. In addition, I briefly mention how the Bible has been read in this context of socio-economic shifts. In a second component of the chapter, I discuss the main characteristics of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, how they contribute to a reading of Genesis 47.13-26, and the ways in which this text can help to deal with and understand socio-economic injustice in the Costa Rican context. Finally, I go on to describe the main guidelines to construct Contextual Bible Studies in the South African context and propose one specific study to respond to the issues of socio-economic exploitation in Costa Rica from a liberating perspective.

1.The Costa Rican socio-economic Context

In previous chapters, I have described what seems to be the main socio-economic dynamics in Ancient Israel and the ideo-theological discourses that supported them. At a certain point in Ancient Israel there was a shift in the socio-economic model. A social organization that would have been based in more egalitarian and less hierarchic relationship with the population and guaranteed on a greater scale their access to resources for survival, was slowly removed from the land. Instead, a model based on the centralization of power and extraction of the people's resources to benefit a small elite was established. This created socio-economic distress and caused the slow pauperization of the people, affecting their quality of life and putting their survival in risk. I believe that this process can be compared with the socio-economic transformations that have occurred in Costa Rica in the last 30 to 40 years and which have endangered the social security of the population.

1.1 The Welfare State in Costa Rica: its social policies and crisis.

Between 1950 and 1978, the Costa Rican state played a central role in the socio-economic development of the country, establishing policies and creating institutions which, managed by the government, ensured a growth in the wellbeing of the population in different areas of life. This type of state, inaugurated after the civil war of 1948, was called a Welfare State, and according to authors like Quesada (2008: 129), was guided by a developmental policy. With this model, the government assumed a priority to promote social development in the country (Quesada 2008: 129). Between the 50s and the 80s, then, Costa Rica experienced an economic growth that allowed the government to increase its participation in the social dimensions of the country that represented an improvement in the living conditions of the population (Quesada 2008: 129).

In this period, the role of the governmental institutions was to ensure that different social services were accessible to Costa Rican families and individuals (Quesada 2008: 148). Two main actions were taken in that time. The first one was to provide the population with basic social security, health services, unemployment subsidies, education, housing, and also to engage in economic intervention in the case of those in extreme poverty (Quesada 2008: 148). The second one was to control, through the state apparatus and institutions, any private activity of individuals and corporations that could affect directly the living conditions of the population (Quesada 2008: 148). During the 50s, 60s and 70s, therefore, the government, together with the initiatives of movements from the civil society, promoted a type of state that would guarantee the provision to the population in important areas for their life, such as health, education, credit, housing, and access to resources like water and electricity. In addition, it controlled the actions of private groups or individuals that could put at risk to the population any access to resources of primary need. The conditions within and without the country

in that period of time allowed that the distribution of wealth especially benefitted the middle classes (Quesada 2008: 129).

The Welfare State was created, according to Costa Rican thinkers of the time like Rodrigo Facio, to play an active role in those sectors/institutions of society where the capitalistic model was in crisis (Quesada 2008: 145). In his opinion, the problematic cycles of capitalism would only be counter-balanced with a more active presence of the state, this through institutions like central banks and others (Quesada 2008: 145). The Welfare State allowed the creation of public universities, institutions to support local agriculture, companies to provide the population with water and electricity, and also the nationalization of banks. It was the continuation of the political effervescence of the 1940's, where rights related to labour, education and health coverage were achieved.

The Welfare State predominated in Costa Rica for thirty years (Quesada 2008: 149), establishing institutions and social rights laws that have been important to guarantee the quality of life of most of the population and have affected the society positively until today. However, at the end of the 1970s, internal and external pressures promoted a change in the model. This transition was apparently the result of a number of different reasons, including accusations of corruption against the government, the high indebtedness of the state to foreign organizations, and the interests of local and external groups to implement a neoliberal economy in the country (Quesada 2008: 147, 202-203). In terms of debt, it was at the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s that the country saw the collapse of the Welfare State and its socio-economic system. Costa Rica's production and exportation had been going well in the 50s and 60s, but in the 70s the problems arose and the government's solution was through credit, which gave birth to a critical problem of foreign debt. This is Quesada's (2008: 128) position, showing how the external debt of Central America changed from $1350 million in 1970 to $17200 in 1986. According to this author, the indebtedness of developing countries increased five times between 1971 to 1978 (Quesada 2008: 203), demonstrating not only the internal crisis of economic models like the one in Costa Rica, but also the actions of foreign institutions which promoted debt and found in it a useful tool to co-opt the economic policies of indebted countries. Foreign debt turned unmanageable, and therefore became one of the instruments used to change the socio-economic model that had been applied in Costa Rica for more than 30 years. Quesada (2008: 204) maintains that foreign debt affected the effectiveness of the Welfare State, which had been so determined to create a horizon of social peace in the country between 1948 and 1980.

It was in 1978, when the collapse of the Costa Rican economy became evident, that ideologists and thinkers in the country, including foreign institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, promoted the idea that the "market will save the day" (Quesada 2008: 149). They not

only used foreign debt to promote this idea, but also the traces of corruption that were found in different institutions that the Welfare State managed. Quesada (2008: 202, 156-157) argues that the Welfare State was presented as a "machine of corruption", and uses as an example for this the accusations against CODESA, which was a conglomerate of companies were the state had invested. Cases like this served to promote the dismantling of the Welfare State (Quesada 2008: 156-157). Calvo (1995: 114) also highlights this element, arguing that neoliberal ideology blamed the state for all the problems of the country.

In spite of the Welfare State's imperfections and accusations of corruption, there is no doubt that the Costa Rican society found in it a strong political power that provided its population with what they needed for a good quality of life in terms of social security, health, education and food. Some of the achievements reached in the time of the Welfare State continue being part of Costa Rican society. Although some have gone, some others remaining, such as those related to health security, communications, electricity and water service are now being seriously endangered by the neoliberal project that has been implemented in the country since the 1980s.

1.2 Socio-economic shift in the Costa Rican context: from the Welfare State to neoliberalism

The end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980's marks the shift in the political economy in Costa Rica, where the Welfare State is condemned as unable to deal with the debts of the government and neoliberalism is presented as the model needed to rescue the Costa Rican economy. As I said earlier, the crisis of the 1970s, where the foreign debt played a major role, made possible the introduction of neoliberalism and globalization in Costa Rica (Quesada 2008: 209). This idea is also shared by scholars like Calvo (1995: 112), who consider that it was in the 80s when initiatives related to neoliberalism were introduced to the field of economic theory in Costa Rica. International institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund would also take advantage of this crisis and interfere in the economic policies of the government, introducing the ideas of neoliberalism (Calvo 1995: 115).

Understood by Esquivel (2013: 93) as a "heterogeneous expression of capitalism", neoliberalism represented a threat to the type of society built in Costa Rica between the 50s and the 80s. Using the ideas of Milton Friedman, authors like Calvo (1995: 113) define neoliberalism as a system that promotes the liberation of the market, eliminating restrictions to compete and controlling foreign debt by limiting the investments of the state. In addition, Calvo argues that for neoliberalism it is

very important to avoid an increase of the state's institutions, and also to eliminate the restrictions that protect the prices of primary consumption resources (Calvo 1995: 113). Taking Calvo's words, neoliberalism would be a system that seeks the dismantling of all the institutions created and promoted by a Welfare State since they would represent "economic loss" and would also interfere with the market.

Neoliberalism promoters presented this system as "salvific", arguing that private institutions were more efficient than those administered by governments (Esquivel 2013: 83). In addition, they defended the "theory of spillage" (Esquivel 2013: 83), which presents the idea that by opening the markets the wealth that reaches those at the top of the economy will also be enjoyed by the other social groups. In spite of this legitimation, Calvo (1995: 113) states that in neoliberalism "the market is the supreme law…and the human life disappears under the law of the market." This criticism on neoliberalism is the result of the consequences that its model has brought, an issue that I describe in the next pages, specifically in regards to the Costa Rican context.

In Costa Rica, neoliberalism took form mainly through what international organizations called Structural Adjustment Programs (PAE in its Spanish initials). These were policies in charge of diminishing the participation of the state in the society so it could re-pay the foreign debt. Quesada (2008: 2005) mentions how several groups insisted that the only way to fix the problem of foreign debt was to give the market total freedom while at the same time dismantling the state by privatizing its institutions and structures. In 1983, international organizations started to press Costa Rican governments to engage with the change in structures as a way to re-pay their debt (Quesada 2008: 206). Such structural changes, therefore served to call for the privatization of the public institutions that the Welfare State had created (Calvo 1995: 115). Quesada (2008: 130, 132) reinforces this position, stating that international organizations and local elites pressured to introduce PAEs in Costa Rica presenting them as international recommendations. These measures, however, threatened the social-focused state that had been promoted since the 1940s (Quesada 2008: 132). In addition, Calvo argues that they formed part of the agenda used by international organizations to introduce neoliberalism around the world, and that even though there is a lot of effort of powerful groups to present such changes positively, the reality is that they usually bring several consequences for the majorities (Calvo 1995: 115).

The process intending to dismantle the political structure that had been providing social protection to the population was carried on carefully. The groups interested in introducing neoliberalism developed a campaign maintaining that privatization was necessary, and for this they strongly discredited the state. They claimed that the state's businesses and institutions had not profited enough

but instead brought losses to the country, that they had not produced well, and that they were too bureaucratic to operate properly (Calvo 1995: 119). Together with this negative campaign against the state, those groups also justified privatization by arguing that "private institutions were more efficient than public" (Esquivel 2013: 83). This propaganda was interested in convincing the population of the need to privatize public institutions (Calvo 1995: 119). However, authors like Calvo suggest that there was a hidden agenda in such programmes, claiming that the interest behind neoliberal groups in Costa Rica was to assume the businesses controlled by the state and enrich themselves with the incomes generated and that have belonged uniquely to the government (Calvo 1995: 117).

Those groups of power interested in the change of the socio-economic model in Costa Rica were able to promote the insertion of neoliberalism due to their access to mass media. Neoliberalism apologists used Costa Rica's means of communication to daily send messages to the population, trying to convince them that the only hope to improve the social life of the country in the middle of the economic crisis was the neoliberal model which would have the capacity to solve the problems faced (Calvo 1995: 116; Quesada 2008: 149). Calvo argues that neoliberal groups insist that economic growth will come with neoliberalism, and as a result of that, socio-economic development (Calvo 1995: 116). However, the results have been the opposite, and neoliberal initiatives have not been able to respond to the needs of the majorities and instead have been one of the causes in the increase of poverty in Central America (Calvo 1995: 116). In Costa Rica, the propaganda has been effective to convince sectors of the population that the institutions managed by the state should be sold, with the consequence that a population protected in the past by a protective state would be, from that point on, at the mercy of the capitalist market (Calvo 1995: 117, 119). Any negative implications, that would be perceived by the people, would make Costa Rican rulers promote laws in relation to "social protection" to distract the majorities from the disaster caused by the neoliberal policies applied (Esquivel 2013: 84).

Neoliberalism would also allow a more direct inherence of the international economy in Costa Rica (Calvo 1995: 115; Quesada 2008: 131-132). Calvo mentions how in 1995 the International Monetary Fund conditioned a loan to the country to change some public institutions (Calvo 1995: 120). He states that, at the time, a reduction in the state's personnel, the privatization of small public institutions, and a limited growth of the workers' salaries was required if Costa Rica wanted credit from this international organization (Calvo 1995: 120). Even though foreign institutions and their policies, and local elites, try to convince the population of their good intentions, in my opinion, it is clear that through the implementation of economic measures they are able to extract the resources of countries while degrading the living conditions of their populations. Quesada notices this aspect, highlighting how foreign debt, free trade agreements and other economic measures presented as "salvific" have always

been used by empires to obtain the resources of other populations (Quesada 2008: 223). The ethic behind such negotiations, Quesada argues, is the one of the empire (Quesada 2008: 223). However, not all the population in Costa Rica has always responded submissively to the impositions of foreign powers and local elites. Quesada reminds his readers about the struggle against the privatization of electricity services in Costa Rica (2008: 219-220), which stopped the intention to sell, not only one of the most profitable institutions of the state, but also one with practically 98% of electric coverage at low prices. The country is at present in the reality of a struggle between the weakening and the affirmation of what is left of the Welfare State. In the next section I describe the general changes that the introduction of neoliberalism has provoked in the socio-economic reality of Costa Rica.

1.3. Socio-economic implications of neoliberalism in the Costa Rican context

In this section, I want to review some of the socio-economic implications attributed to, by Costa Rican experts, the introduction of neoliberalism as a political economy in Costa Rica. As stated earlier, the application of the neoliberal model in the Costa Rican context at the beginning of the 1980s had a severe impact in the social programmes and institutions that the state created over more than 30 years. The social benefits for the majorities that were achieved in the time of the Welfare State were put at risk with the introduction of a model that insists on the necessity to weaken the state's participation in social dimensions in order to make feasible the payment of foreign-debt.

This process of weakening the state's participation in social affairs deteriorated the quality of life of most of the population (Calvo 1995: 116), and especially of the more vulnerable. Esquivel (2013: 84) mentions that neoliberal policies affected the population in areas like income, education, literacy, access to water, health and nutrition, and job opportunities; aspects that had been so important for the government and social groups and essential for the well-being of the majorities who were endangered by economic interests. This situation is also highlighted by the Estado de la Nación 2013[84], a study that showed how the "cutbacks" on the government with the introduction of neoliberalism were specifically in areas of "universal coverage", like public health and education (Estado de la Nación 2013: 88). This study also mentions that the programmes eliminated were those that protected the most vulnerable and impoverished people of the country (Estado de la Nación 2013: 88). The Estado de la Nación points out that in 2011 public social investment dropped in 1%, an example of how the economic policies of the country have been affecting social programmes (Estado de la Nación 2013: 124). The actions of the state which, besides stopping the investment in social security, reduced the personnel of its institutions

[84] The Informe Estado de la Nación is a system that follows up Costa Rica's situation using measures and evaluations that seek to test Human Sustainable Development in the country specifically in the social ,economic, environmental and political areas.

and made them more ineffective. This not only worsened the living conditions of people, but also provoked an increase in social resistance (Esquivel 2013: 286).

All these measures, which began to be applied in the 80s, have caused many people to move into conditions of poverty and extreme poverty, while at the same time causing sectors of the working class to lose their capacity to save and consume (Esquivel 2013: 86). Esquivel (2013: 86) sees a process where the middle class enters into poverty, and those into poverty to indigence. The value of salaries and wages has deteriorated due to the cost of living, especially losing the capacity to deal with the increase in the prices of food of primary consumption (Esquivel 2013: 86). Subsidies to basic products decreased while the environment also became a resource for income and profit (Esquivel 2013: 86; see also Quesada 2008: 216). The implementation of the neoliberal model created particularly harsh conditions at the beginning, where it is recorded how the numbers in human development dropped 20 points in only ten years (Esquivel 2013: 87-88).

This increase in poverty and social inequality seems to have been another consequence of the introduction of neoliberalism in Costa Rica. It is not that there was no poverty before such policies were implemented, but that what has been put into practice has contributed to a faster deterioration of the people's quality of life. According to the study of the Estado de la Nación 2013, "in 2011 21.6% of the population lived in total poverty, while 6.4% experienced extreme poverty, which means 1.140.435 people were in some form of poverty" (Estado de la Nación 2013: 87). The study shows an increase in the amount of people living in poverty and how the deterioration of social equality has been caused by the decrease in the government's investment in social programmes (Estado de la Nación 2013: 88). After more than 30 years after the introduction of neoliberalism in the economy of the country, the situation has been getting worse, with ever increasing poverty and poor control of inequality. In 2010, for example, the number of poor households in the country was the highest since 1990, while the gap between rich and poor also reached its highest point since 1994 (Estado de la Nación 2013: 116-117). If the promises of neoliberalism were that everyone was going to prosper due to the liberation of the market and the privatization of the state's institutions, things seem to have worked otherwise, and the current situation in Costa Rica demonstrates that "economic growth, by itself, is not enough to reduce poverty" (Estado de la Nación 2013: 115).

The reduction of the state's participation in institutions that cared for the general social welfare of the population has had an important impact on the living conditions of Costa Ricans. Furthermore, neoliberalism has demonstrated an incapability of contributing positively in the economic crisis of the country; instead it has been a tool to promote privatization of state institutions, which control

monopolies that were once opened to the market, making the rich richer and more heavily oppressing the majorities.

I believe that the socio-economic changes that Costa Rica has experienced in the last decades and the conflicts around them have several connections with Genesis 47.13-26 and its socio-historic context. In section three of this chapter, therefore, I discuss these connections and the way this text and the Costa Rican context can illuminate each other in the struggle for social transformation and socio-economic justice. The work of this section is focused on showing how, after social convulsion and revolution, the Costa Rican state was organized in a way that built institutions which cared for the main means of survival of the population. Laws and regulations were created to guarantee the people's access to the resources they needed to keep up a "good" quality of life. However, internal corruption, debt, interests of local and foreign elites, and external pressure, among others, were factors that promoted a change in economic model. Governmental policies in favour of social well-being, which usually benefitted the majority, were stopped, as were the creation of institutions managed by the state. Neoliberalism was introduced, and with it, a set of promises that the model would promote economic growth and social improvement. However, the results were different, and groups behind neoliberalism not only limited the participation of the state in the creation of policies and institutions to improve the life of the majorities, but also started to privatize those governmental organisms that had been created to guarantee the access of the people to resources of primary need. Consequently, the situation of Costa Ricans who belong to middle and lower social classes has been getting worse from that moment on, and the condition currently is one of contestation, with groups asking for a total introduction of neoliberalism and others promoting a change of economic system.

This struggle between groups and socio-economic systems reflects a struggle of ideo-theological and socio-economic discourses. Some groups make a socio-economic choice, neoliberalism, which ideo-theological discourse defends that progress is "economic prosperity" for all and which presents such model as "salvific". Their ideological argument is, as I mentioned, that neoliberalism is required to rescue Costa Ricans from the financial chaos where the country fell. Faith and religion has also played its role in this campaign, since politicians related to groups interested in neoliberalism, usually part of important areas of the government, use mostly the Catholic Church and its religious ceremonies to promote their ideological and socio-economic ideas. In spite of this, it has been evident to many in Costs Rica that the promises made by those who support neoliberalism have not come true, and therefore their discourse has proven false due to the catastrophic results of the introduction of neoliberalism in Costa Rica.

On the other hand, other groups have chosen to support a more protective socio-economic model, one that relates to the Welfare State and its interest in social protection. The ideo-theological discourse of these groups usually identifies with a defence of the rights of the majorities and their social project is to create a society that guarantees the access of resources of primary need for all the inhabitants. These groups have used religion to support their perspective. In the 1940s, for example, the beginning of the movement that created the Welfare State was influenced by the participation of different groups, including the Communist party and the Catholic Church. Religion was understood as an important part of the national identity, and with it the search for social equality. However, as time has passed, both groups, linked to religious (or a-religious) principles, have diluted its presence in the struggle for a more just society, leaving the struggle for a Welfare State without a clear and overt ideological and theological discourse that defends the cause of the majorities. In spite of this, groups like the Lutheran church, which is currently part of the movement for social justice and the defence of the institutions that guarantee the social welfare of the majorities, can be considered one example of those groups whose ideo-theological discourse expresses that God is at the side of the impoverished and oppressed. This institution understands the importance of the state as a guarantor of social justice, and supports their discourse theologically.

As this description in this section makes clear, Costa Rica has undergone a shift in its socio-economic model, which has worsened the situation of those groups who belong to the middle and lower classes of society. A more protective model was abandoned and substituted by a more globalizing and capitalistic system, which has put at risk the institutions and laws created to foment the well-being of Costa Rican citizens. There is an ongoing struggle between the groups that defend a neoliberal model and those supporting a more protective state, and the church, in most of the cases, has been silent about this debate. To finalize this first section of the chapter, I briefly mention the role that the Bible and Christianity have played in this debate around socio-economic models and social justice, taking as the main example, the Catholic Church, which is the official religious institution of the government.

1.4. Reading the Bible in Costa Rica: silence before socio-economic injustice

After this brief description of the Costa Rican context in terms of its socio-economic conditions, the question I want to raise is related to the way the Bible is read in this convulsive situation of economic deterioration. By doing this, I am taking a great risk as very little has been written around the topic. This may be the result of the belief that, we, as Costa Ricans are not aware that our readings of the Bible are contextual, and assume that what we say about God and the Bible belongs to a wider world of hermeneutical discourses that must look alike and reach the same conclusions. Because of

this, it seems that there is no consciousness of the possibilities of promoting the idea of a specific way to read the Bible in the Costa Rican context, and we continue to be tied to universalistic hermeneutics.

To claim that I am going to describe how the Bible is read in Costa Rica in terms of socio-economic injustice, however, would be more than irresponsible. Therefore, I build my argument on two significant past events: I briefly look at the 1980's and 90's and how, on the one hand, Costa Rica was a centre for the production of Popular Reading of the Bible and therefore a place where theology was produced in a connection with the socio-historic period movements of Latin America. On the other, I show how, in protestant circles of that same period of time, any historical interpretation was rejected. In addition, I describe current issues, taking as a special reference a document written by the Conferencia Episcopal of the Catholic Church in Costa Rica. I have chosen the Catholic Church for three reasons. The Catholic Church has the highest amount of affiliates in the country, with about 80% of the population as members, making it the most influential church in this context. This institution is also the official religion of the state, supported by the government and present in many political acts and decisions; Finally, as an institution it makes public its theological positions in different situations that concern the Costa Rican context, making available material that allows the study of their theological and biblical positions in different aspects of life.

The document I use to sketch the role of the Bible and Christianity in socio-economic justice is: *Rehabilitating Politics: Ethical Criteria to illuminate the electoral process and democratic life.* It was written with the purpose to guide Catholic believers to discern by using "Christian" ethics on how to vote in the past presidential election in February 2014. I consider that the text reflects the way the leaders of the Catholic Church in Costa Rica read the Bible and reflect on their context. In addition, I think that by noting the order of principles that need to be considered in order to vote, social justice is in number eight[85] – the last one of the list. Therefore, we can understand the importance of this dimension for this group not only in their biblical and their Christian tradition, but also in the context where they interact.

The question behind this section is concerned in dealing with the way the Bible is read in the Costa Rican context, and by Costa Ricans, given the situation that most Costa Ricans declare themselves Christian devotees. Moreover, I want to make evident that even though the Bible and Christianity play an important role in the lives of the people, their implications in the political and socio-economic issues of the country are sometimes not very clear. Costa Ricans seem to have an interest in the Bible; however, they face trouble when they try to connect their reading of this text with the social issues that affect them and their country every day. The Bible seems to be for situations related uniquely with "heaven" and in this world it seems it to lose relevance, especially for those who are

[85] See Conferencia Episcopal (2013: 12).

oppressed, marginalized, impoverished and victimized. The document of the Catholic Church that I want to mention reflects these limitations, because although it invites believers to engage in politics and social issues, it gives little importance to socio-economic justice in a country where poverty has been increasing in the last 30 years and where its political leaders have been constantly accused of corruption and injustice.

In terms of readings committed to socio-economic justice, one work that has been done in Costa Rica is that centred in the Departamento Ecumenico de Investigaciones, with the Chilean priest Pablo Richard as one of its leading referents. In the first volume of the RIBLA magazine[86], Richard wrote an article reflecting on Popular reading of the Bible in Latin America (Richard 1988: 30-48). Even though the magazine has had a Latin American audience, through it, Costa Rica became the centre for a theological production that considered the struggle for socio-economic justice as a key reflecting point. Another example comes from the work of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano. Since 1970's, authors like Victorio Araya, a Costa Rican, started to reflect on the relationship between faith and Marxism, which gave the theological production of the SBL a more politicized profile in order to respond to socio-economic issues (Prieto 1993: 27). This and other works promoted the creation of modules like *Political Reading of the Bible,* where the emerging Liberation Theology was used as a framework (Prieto 1993: 27). Other important references in this process was the Mexican scholar Elza Tamez, whose work was focused on reading the Bible using Liberation Theology from a feminist perspective (Prieto 1993: 35). However, little of this work influenced the religious communities in Costa Rica. For example, in 1985 the Alianza Evangélica Costarricense expelled the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano due to conflicts between their ideological postures and ecclesiastical tendencies (Prieto 1993: 29). This has represented a separation between the Seminario and the churches in Costa Rica since then (Prieto 1993: 34).

Contrary to the work of the Departamento Ecumenico de Investigaciones and Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, the reading of the Bible, and consequently the theological production that emerged from it, in protestant churches has not been really interested in reflecting on socio-economic issues. According to Araya and Craig (1981: 34-35), the protestant movement entered Latin America in connection with capitalism, which has resulted the churches in Costa Rica legitimizing the status quo and ignoring the basic necessities of the Costa Rican population when reading the Bible and doing theology. Araya and Craig (1981: 36-38) mention that most protestant churches in Costa Rica around the 1980s had an individualistic and moralistic discourse, teaching that God's kingdom has nothing to

[86] Magazine started in 1988 with the purpose to reflect on the reality of the Latin American and Caribbean communities from a marginalized perspective (Schwantes 1988:5).

do with the historical world. Engaging in politics or in the change of socio-economic structures was discouraged and the obedience to current political authorities demanded (Araya and Craig 1981: 37-38). The Bible, therefore, had nothing to do with the context or with socio-historic preoccupations among most protestant churches in Costa Rica, something that has not really changed after more than 30 years.

In terms of the current situation in Costa Rica, the document from the Conferencia Episcopal de Costa Rica has a contrasting stance. It begins by reflecting on how important it is for believers to participate in political processes and in the construction of social justice. The writing, which comes from the Costa Rican bishops, mentions how "the proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ" also has political implications (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 3). Citing the Pope Francis, the authors invite members of the Catholic Church to "collaborate in the promotion of a society where injustice can be overcome" (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 3). This document from the Episcopal Church not only emphasizes the importance of engaging in political process and struggle for social justice, but also maintains that such actions are closely related to the Christian movement begun with Jesus, which was, in their consideration, political. This understanding comes, including the list of ethical values for voting (together with their priorities), according to the document, from three sources: the Gospel (Bible?), the Social Doctrine of the Church, and the Magisterio Eclesial (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 5). It is here that can be found a trace of "how the Bible is read" in the high sectors of the Costa Rican Catholic Church, which affects a great deal how believers read Scriptures too. The mention of the Gospel, with capital "G", conveys a universalizing understanding of the "message of the Bible", and this, therefore, informs us about some of the characteristics of how such a text is written in the Catholic institution. However, it is important to highlight that the social and political concerns mentioned before, and the ethical values the document presents required to elect a president, are claimed to come from the understanding of this text, together with insights from tradition.

Even though the emphasis at the beginning of the text is social justice, the moment the text enumerates the criterion that has to be followed by believers when voting for social justice, it seems to delude and acquire a secondary role. This is clear in the position that social justice plays in the ordering of priorities when electing the political party to rule Costa Rica, since this element is the last of eight principles. This aspect, for me, is very interesting: The document has been emphasizing the importance of assuming a solidary attitude (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 6) and also criticizing the idea of progress as something reduced to economic growth (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 7). However, the moment it mentions the first criterion to elect the president, it says that what needs to be considered is the aspect of "freedom" (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 7). From then on, the element of social justice seems to

disappear from the list of priorities to elect the president. The list goes on mentioning voting for political groups against abortion (second priority), and for those that defend "the family", which is basically a position against the movements that defend the same-sex marriages (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 8). The protection of the environment takes places four in preference, and only until the fifth ethical value do we again find a clear reference to social justice, since Catholic believers are called to vote against corruption (see Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 9-10). After considering corruption, church members are invited to choose political parties that defend clear and feasible proposals, and to then select those groups who claim for social integration and avoid dividing the country (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 11). Only at the end, and when it seems that it may be left out, social justice is referred to. The Costa Rican Conferencia Episcopal positions it as the last aspect that needs to be considered when voting for a president and political party. The struggle for social justice, then, is given a marginal role and becomes the least important element that shapes the practice of those who vote but also those who lead the country. It is amazing how the members of the Conferencia Episcopal, after beginning their document reflecting on political participation and social justice, give this last criterion an unimportant place.

On page 12 of this document, the bishops express how important it is to engage with social justice and to work for the common well-being of the Costa Rican population (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 12). They even recognize the different social problems that the country faces and which are affecting especially the most vulnerable groups, saying how elements such as health coverage, education, security, dignifying work are under crisis (Conferencia Episcopal 2013: 12). However, when setting priorities for the practice of the "message" they find in the Bible and in their tradition, they prefer aspects related to sexuality and reproduction, the environment and the clarity of a political idea instead of a call for social justice. Is this related to the way the Bible is read in the Costa Rican context? I think that this plays a major role, especially in the difficulties faced by Catholic and protestant groups in order to connect the text, their faith and their traditions to more committed social projects.

In spite of this, two other groups are breaking with this way of reading the Bible and are understanding the text as Scripture that is intimately connected to political participation and the construction of social justice. The first group, interestingly, is linked to the Catholic Church. It is the Ecumenical Network of Popular Reading of the Bible, which is a lay group that works with base communities. It meets every two months and its work includes peasants from rural areas, people from marginal communities of the capital city, migrants, groups related to the defence of sexual diversity, the environment and others, including organic intellectuals and socially-committed theologians and biblical scholars. This space is heavily influenced by the principles of the Theology of Liberation, and has been

led by people like Pablo Richard, who is one of the representatives of this theology in Latin America. Because of the theology and ideology that characterizes the group, and the people that it integrates, the Bible acquires the dimension of a text that talks to our reality and where we find inputs to construct a better society. Here, social justice has a primordial role and importance. In addition, it looks for giving a voice to the "common people", following the method of the Popular Reading of the Bible, which therefore implies the construction of a new, usually marginalized, theology. This movement could be considered a marginal but existing way to read the Bible in Costa Rica, which prioritizes social justice as one of its key elements for biblical interpretation.

Another interesting movement that interprets the Bible in a more social way is the one represented by the Lutheran Church. In Costa Rica, the Lutheran Church can be considered as marginal because of two issues. First, it is not a mainline church in the country, but a small denomination composed by around eight small congregations, that makes its presence not very visible for the Costa Rican citizens. Secondly, it is focused to work with the marginalized sectors of society, building its churches in urban and rural areas that are stricken by poverty and social problems. Its members are part of migrant, indigenous and socially marginalized groups, among others, so its work and theology reflects the preoccupations for these specific sectors. These commitments are the result of their reading of the Bible, which has an interest in the promotion of justice and dignity in different areas of life, including the socio-economic one. In addition, the Lutheran Church is one of the denominations in Costa Rica that has trained its pastors in the method of Popular Reading of the Bible, demonstrating their commitment to the re-vindication of the people and also to the construction of a just and inclusive society in the name of Christianity. If we take these actions because of their Bible reading, then we could say that their interpretation of the text is clearly committed to the construction of social justice. The Ecumenical Network and the Lutheran Church are two examples that show "other voices" in terms of the way the Bible is interpreted in Costa Rica, and in my opinion are important to highlight if we want the Scriptures and Christianity to be more accountable to the challenges that the Costa Rican society faces. In many ways these two groups represent a reading of the text that is needed to promote projects of liberation and dignity, elements that are necessary in Costa Rica.

After reviewing the general characteristics of the Costa Rican context, we can distinguish two main socio-economic projects with their corresponding theological discourses. As I explained at the beginning of this section, groups representing Neoliberalism and the Welfare State are in conflict, both looking to influence the Costa Ricans to support their intentions and assume their beliefs. This struggle continues currently and makes those who participate in it to take a side, something that from Christianity and biblical-theological work cannot be ignored. The work of the Catholic Church, the

Ecumenical Network and the Lutheran Church, although mentioned briefly, offer an idea of how religious groups respond to this situation from their tradition and biblical interpretation.

I believe strongly that the consequences of neoliberalism make it imperative not only for religious but civil and governmental groups to choose the side of the impoverished and oppressed, of those who suffer the abuse of the rulers and who see their quality of life deteriorating due to unjust socio-economic policies. The reading of the Bible in Costa Rica, therefore, is required by its context to be biased and to search for a voice and image of God that bring hope to those who suffer. In addition, it is called to denounce and confront the systems of injustice, both political and theological, that create material and ideological oppression. The ideological and theological projects behind the interpretation of the Bible in Costa Rica need to be made overt, and those who read the Bible to understand its context, whether professionally trained or not, are called to engage in hermeneutical processes that respond to the economic oppression lived in the country. They are required to explore new ways in which the Bible and the ideo-theological and socio-economic dynamics behind it can contribute to the construction of a more just and dignifying society, and to respond prophetically to the challenges of its time on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the main elements of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics as a way to find guidelines that can contribute to the interpretation of the biblical text and the Costa Rican context from a perspective of a liberating, just and dignifying life.

2. Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics of the Bible

The Costa Rican context provides a picture, although partial and limited, of what the country is experiencing in terms of the reading of the Bible in a situation of socio-economic injustice. Evident from this is the importance for Costa Rican churches to become more socially engaged in their reading of the Bible and to rescue certain elements of the text that emphasize a God that cares for our reality. Being careful with using notions of universalization, it is my belief that we need an ideo-theological presupposition that sees God as interested in a dignifying social life for all, and whose command is that we engage in the struggle for social justice. I propose that inputs for this type of reading of the Bible and understanding of the divinity can come from insights offered by Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics. They not only question the text and an interpretation of the Bible that promotes injustice, marginalization, oppression, abuse and violence of any kind, but these frameworks also engage in the rescue of the voices within and without the text that come from marginalized and oppressed groups. As described in this section, Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics engage with elements of justice, power and oppression, and is interested in the emancipation of all human beings from the different oppressions they may experience at the levels of economic, cultural, gender, social and political

aspects, among others. I believe, therefore, that such frameworks, and more than that, ideo-theological projects, can contribute greatly to a refreshing reading of the Bible in Costa Rica, and also to give a faith-based impulse to the struggle for social transformation. In a context like the Costa Rican one, where the rights and social well-being of the population is endangered, the responsibility to take sides in our readings of the text cannot be ignored. The question around this section deals with the different presuppositions and projects of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics. I begin by describing their commitments and basic interests. After this, I interpret Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of the questions that these two frameworks raise. Finally, I approach the Costa Rican context not only from the two hermeneutical positions but also from the text of Genesis 47.13-26 and the new light it can throw on the Costa Rican context when read from Postcolonial and Liberation hermeneutics.

Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics of the Bible have a recent story in Biblical Sciences. Both originated in the second half of the twentieth century to respond to socio-historic circumstances related to diverse types of oppression. Due to this, both have a commitment to emancipation, and this is one ideo-theological project that is vital for dealing with socio-economic injustice in the text, in its history of interpretation, and also in the way the Bible is read in the Costa Rican context. Liberation Hermeneutics, in the works of Richard (1988), Mosala (1989), and Pixley-Boff (1993) highlight the necessity to emancipate people from socio-economic exploitation. According to Sugirtharajah (2002: 66), these approaches want to deal with the question of "how to transform the unjust world and how people can be saved from the effects of structural sin." The emphasis of this Hermeneutics has been on socio-economic dimensions, and here I use the inputs offered in this area by South African and Latin American scholars. In terms of Postcolonial Hermeneutics, this approach is defined as an "…ongoing battle for emancipation… (that) attempts to dismantle imperial institutions and dominating structures" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 52). Authors like Sugirtharajah (2002: 120) consider that Postcolonial Hermeneutics are interested in diverse types of oppression, and that is, therefore, in any type of struggle, including for example, the one of gender equality sustained by Feminist readings of the Bible (Sugirtharajah 2002: 28-29).

Both Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics have developed a series of ideological, theological and methodological presuppositions that help them approach the biblical text from a particular perspective, and to respond to the contextual issues they are interested in from a very concrete project (Richard 1988: 7; Sugirtharajah 2004: 259). Even though these frameworks have differences, theorists of both reading projects have written about their commitment to liberating struggles (Sugirtharajah 2002: 103). When I mean that I am interested in reading the Bible for liberating projects, I am including the wide range of struggles that have been incorporated by these two

approaches, which go from socio-economic to gender, sexual, cultural, indigenous and political agendas of emancipation (West 2014: 6). My perception of "liberating" is shaped by these kinds of struggle, and in terms of socio-economic liberation, which is the main preoccupation in this thesis, I use the term to evoke a structural socio-economic system that can function to provide dignifying living conditions in terms of health, work, housing, alimentation, education and freedom.

In regards to Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, I would like to highlight three specific elements that both approaches offer and that I consider important to read not only the biblical text but also the Costa Rican context in terms of the construction of liberating projects. The first one is related to the ideo-theological positioning assumed by both methods, having a preference to read for the liberation of diverse forms of dominating structures. The second is strictly connected to the those groups privileged by the interpretative methods, and the important role their own voices and contexts play in a emancipatory interpretation of the text. Finally, I want to discuss the role of the Bible and the Christian tradition in Liberation and Biblical Hermeneutics, and the way these approaches can contribute with refreshing ideological and theological inputs to contribute to the construction of liberating realities.

2.1. Reading the Bible for the construction of liberating projects

2.1.1. Reading the Bible from a liberating perspective

The first point that I want to discuss in terms of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics is their commitment to read the text and the context from a liberating perspective. Even though my focus here is in socio-economic exploitation, reading for liberation must include a commitment to interpret text and reality to reach racial, cultural, religious, political, ideological, gender/sexual emancipation, for justice and dignity. This is a position that I assume, understanding that the ideo-theological discourses of the biblical text can suggest different and contrary projects. In this sense, I follow the call of Itumeleng Mosala to take sides in current and past struggles even though the biblical texts are ambiguous about their preference. In terms of the struggles perceived in the texts, Mosala (1989: 27) argues that "what one can do is take sides in a struggle that is not confirmed by the whole Bible, or even of the Gospels, but is rather encoded in the text as a struggle representing different positions and groups in the society behind the text". I acknowledge the ambiguity of the biblical text for my presupposition, and that is why I follow Mosala in the necessity to express overtly our current preferences to interpret text and reality, without ignoring that in many cases our position will contest those of the text. In addition, our contexts and other sources inform the type of liberation that I am using here.

Postcolonialism also influences my position in this regard. According to Sugirtharajah (2004: 260), the critical principle to define liberation "is not derived only from the Bible but is determined by contextual needs and other warrants". In Sugirtharajah's perspective, the Bible is among "many liberating texts", and that is also a preconception that I assume to respond to the realities of oppression in our contexts, in this case the Costa Rican. However, I discuss this further in the last part of this section.

For the moment, I want to emphasize the idea that in terms of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, the agenda is to respond to a situation of socio-economic oppression and dehumanization with a voice of hope and resistance. When reflecting on the work of Liberation Hermeneutics, Sugirtharajah mentions how the work of the theologians committed to this cause "were seeking for a liberation based on biblical foundations - a total liberation which was capable of creating a new person and a qualitatively different society" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 65). Their preoccupation, as I mentioned in earlier paragraphs, was to deal with structural socio-economic oppression (Sugirtharajah 2002: 66). Postcolonialism coincides with liberating movements, assuming projects to resist "any kind of oppression" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 28-29). This approach deals with old and new forms of oppression, analysing "situations where one social group dominated another" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 11, 13).

Because of this positioning, Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics reads on behalf of the groups that have suffered domination, oppression, exclusion and abuse of any kind. The discourse and practice constructed from this proposition need to be put into practice carefully. Boer (2005: 173) reminds those committed to this cause that "the task of Postcolonialism is ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the exploited are catered to, rather than merely an interesting and engaging avenue of inquiry". Boer emphasizes the importance to engage in this emancipatory project, and warns about assuming this approach just for individual purposes. Sugirtharajah (2004: 258) agrees with Boer that the purpose of Postcolonial Hermeneutics is to dignify the lives of those who have been suffering at the bottom of oppressive projects. This author maintains that Postcolonialism is attracted to "probe injustices, produce new knowledge which problematizes well entrenched positions, and enhance the lives of the marginalized" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 258). The liberating project, therefore, is strictly connected to the lives of those who have suffered and are suffering any type of oppression. There is no possibility, therefore, to make differences between people oppressed or dynamics of domination. Sugirtharajah (2004: 260-261) also raises this issue using the Exodus narrative as an example, which is central in the construction of Liberation Theology in Latin America. He exposes the danger of appropriating biblical texts and their intended ideo-theological agendas when the consequences are not measured carefully, and argues that the Exodus narratives had catastrophic results not only for

Canaanites but also for "American, Palestinian and Aboriginal contexts" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 260-261). A Postcolonial perspective, Sugirtharajah argues, "…reads the narrative from a Canaanite point of view and discerns the parallels between the humiliated people of biblical and contemporary times" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 261). The liberating programme of the Postcolonial approach, and the one that I am assuming here, is committed to deal with this kind of situation and go against Biblical tradition or any other type of discourse in order to engage with oppressive agendas.

The Hermeneutics of Liberation that I want to propose here considers that liberation must be the result of a dialogue between biblical texts and context (Sugirtharajah 2002: 120 and 2004: 262), assuming a decolonizing enterprise "as a way to reach theological, economic and psychological independency" (Brett 2008: 1). I think that liberation is an important narrative in the middle of a situation where many still experience different kinds of oppression. Sugirtharajah (2002: 117 and 2004: 259) has a similar position, stating that "…liberation as a grand narrative provides hope for countless millions of people who daily face institutional and personal violence and oppression." I support Sugirtharajah's view that "liberation as meta-story…still has to play out its full potential" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 266).

As I mentioned before, using Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics provides the tools to consider a variety of oppressions (Sugirtharajah 2002: 120) that means that different types of domination are unveiled and questioned. David Jobling (2005), mentioning the work of Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and her usage of the concept Kyriarchy, expands the notions of domination in a very useful way. Talking about the concept of Kyriarchy, Jobling argues that such terms include "the grand system of institutionalized domination and subordination in the western tradition, within which subsystems of domination based on gender, class, race, age, etc., mutually reinforce each other" (Jobling 2005: 196). According to these words, there is a grand system of domination that acquires "diverse faces" at the moment when it is put into practice, where socio-economic oppression plays one role of control. I want to emphasize this because even though my work is related to socio-economic dimensions, the Liberation and Postcolonial approaches are useful to deal with other systems of domination. Segovia, who works in the area of Postcolonial criticism, also mentions this idea, maintaining that - "From the perspective of postcolonial studies…questions of culture, ideology and power emerge as crucial" (Segovia 1998: 58). With this, he recognizes the plurality of projects that Postcolonialism assumes and that should be incorporated by Liberation Hermeneutics.

In this interest to unveil projects of domination, it is necessary to pay attention to the dynamics of oppression that affect our projects of liberation from within and without our context. Boer, for example, mentions how the Postcolonialism task is to "reread the history, art, texts and practices of European colonialism and its aftermath" (Boer 2005:166). Jobling, however, asks us to go further in this

analysis. He mentions that in Postcolonial work there is the need to be careful not to find oppression and resistance only between former or neo-colonizers and former or neo-colonized, but also between groups within a same context. Jobling, citing Aijaz Ahmad, critiques various Postcolonialisms that "divide the world into oppressor nations and victim nations, with scant attention to class division and struggle within both kinds of nation" (Jobling 2005: 192). This remark is very useful for the Costa Rican context I have been paying attention to, since it is important to denounce the internal and external oppressive projects that have been creating socio-economic exploitation in the country. Not only local and international projects would be interrogated in Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, but also the biblical text and Christian tradition. Even though I will engage with this ahead in this section, I want to highlight the importance to question the Bible and its interpretation the same way we do with local and foreign dominating enterprises. Sugirtharajah (2004: 251; See also Mosala 1989) recognizes this need, maintaining that "Before the text can be mined for its liberative potential…its hegemonic assumptions have to be exposed."

Reading from a liberating perspective using Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics requires the assumption of a concrete ideological and theological agenda. There are no uninterested readers (see West 1993), but besides knowing that, I want to be overt that in terms of liberating hermeneutics I take the side of those who face any type of oppression or domination. Gerald West, for example, mentions how "Biblical studies has never been neutral or objective, something which the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed everywhere have long recognized" (West 1995: 82). This is a reality that needs to be recognized in any interpretation of the text we do. However, West goes beyond and argues about the overt position that was required to be taken in South Africa due to the reality of apartheid that was lived there for more than forty years. He states that "The challenge for the South African context of struggle is first, to affirm that one does and should have commitments in reading the Bible and second, to argue that these commitments should be shaped by the poor and oppressed" (West 1995: 82). His remark not only reflects the context where he is reading, but also the option that he has assumed within this context. In the liberating hermeneutical project I am trying to describe here, this is a very important, promoting a reading that is shaped by those who experience the consequences of dominating systems. Pixley and Boff (1993: 209), interpreting the Exodus account in the context of Latin America, recognize that this narrative shows that justice, or in other words, assumes a liberating project that "means to take sides with the oppressed". Musa Dube, working on Postcolonial Feminist Hermeneutics of the Bible, considered by Sugirtharajah a liberating project, suggests the importance to understand that "we are not neutral readers" (Dube 2004: 123-124).

In his work of Biblical Hermeneutics of the Bible and Black Theology, Itumeleng Mosala reiterates the necessity to engage with ideological positions at the moment, to read not only the Bible but the context where one reads from. He criticizes strongly Liberation Hermeneutics that do not take into consideration the own ideological projects within the text, which could be part of the oppressors' agenda instead of groups who struggle for liberation (Mosala 1989: 6). In this sense, Mosala takes as example the work of Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu, and although he recognizes that "their discourse is committed to the goals of these struggles (black liberation from apartheid)…", their discourse "…draws its weapons of combat from the social class assumption with which these struggles are in conflict" (Mosala 1989: 6). Seeing this problem, Mosala (1989: 4) argues that "…the ideological and theoretical enslavement of black theology to the biblical hermeneutics of dominant theologies often leads to the promotion of those theologies…". To avoid this enslavement, Mosala (1989: 4) considers it elementary to "…openly declare where it (the liberating approach) stands ideologically and theoretically". Mosala's work, therefore, agrees with West, Pixley, Boff and Dube in the impossibility to take sides in struggles within and without the text (conff Mosala 1989: 27).

His contribution is important for many reasons, but specifically because of the notion he offers to find distinct ideological and theological projects in the biblical text, which makes finding in it resources for emancipation a very complex process. This I also expand later, and for now I want to emphasize the idea of how important it is in reading for liberating projects to take sides with the impoverished and oppressed. West, citing Schussler Fiorenza, highlights this point by saying that "Intellectual neutrality is not possible in a historical world of exploitation and oppression" (West 1995: 87). West mentions how Fiorenza articulates the idea that "The basic insight of liberation theologies and their methodological starting point is the insight that all theology knowingly or not is by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed" (West 1995:87). This is why I believe it important to highlight the position of Liberation Hermeneutics approach whose ideological and theological positions has put them to work for the oppressed.

A liberating perspective in Biblical Hermeneutics, therefore, will be overt in their ideological and theological interest to read on behalf of the oppressed and against any type of dominating structure. This needs to be clear since it is going to be one of the central aspects to read not only the biblical texts but also to commit to the liberating projects that our contexts present. Now, I mention the aspect related to reader and context, which is also a vital part of Liberation and Postcolonial readings of the Bible.

2.1.2. Readers and context:

The second element that both Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics offer for liberating readings of the Bible is the pre-eminence given to the role of the readers and the context to interpret text and reality.

Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics have assumed the preference to read the Bible and the reality from the perspective of the communities of the marginalized and oppressed. Pixely and Boff (1993), for example, talking about the role of the Exodus in Liberation Theology, argue that "Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is characterized by his preferential option for the oppressed" (Pixley and Boff 1993: 209). This theological and ideological principle, therefore, would be the one that will guide their interpretation of the text and their lens to analyse their context. Gerald West (1995: 86), citing Gustavo Gutiérrez when dealing with Hermeneutics of Liberation, states that "Liberation theology…has chosen - "nonpersons" - as its chief interlocutors… the poor, the exploited classes, the marginalized races, and all despised cultures". This quotation is important not only to the pre-eminence of the socio-economically exploited in the Theology of Liberation, but also to take advantage of the mention of "marginalized races and all despised cultures" to expand the preoccupation of this theology to other kinds of oppression. West (1995: 88, 91) keeps reminding his readers that "…accountability and solidarity with the poor and oppressed is critical to liberation hermeneutics". He is clear about the essential role that marginal populations play in doing Theology and Liberation Hermeneutics, stating that "Doing theology or interpreting the Bible is a second act which is based on the experience of and commitment to the struggle of the poor and oppressed" (West 1995: 88). Solidarity and accountability, for West, is to respond to the situations and promote the struggles not only of the oppressed in current contexts, but also those in ancient times (West 1995: 91). It is clear, therefore, that a liberating hermeneutic has to put the dominated and oppressed population in the centre of its reflection.

Postcolonial authors agree with this principle and see the marginalized communities as key part of their theological construction. Authors like Sugirtharajah recognize the work of Liberation Hermeneutics. He highlights what he considers its "desire to take the other – the poor, women, indigenous, and all the marginalized peoples seriously" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 114). Arguing that Postcolonialism's work is interested in projects of emancipation (Sugirtharajah 2002: 25), this author maintains that Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics have similar preoccupations, since:

> …both Liberation Hermeneutics and Postcolonial criticism share a common interpretative vocation – for instance, de-ideologizing dominant interpretation, a commitment to the other, and distrust to totalizing tendencies. More significantly, both are committed to social and political empowerment of the oppressed, and critical reclamation of the cultural resources of people who were historically denigrated (Sugirtharajah 2002: 103).

In this regard, Postcolonialism and Liberation Hermeneutics share the commitment to the process of liberation and dignification. However, Sugirtharajah is very critical about the participation of the oppressed and impoverished communities in the construction of the theological discourse of Liberation Hermeneutics. He states that:

> …in its overzealousness to represent the poor, liberation hermeneutics has ended up as a liberation theology of the poor rather than a theology of liberation by the poor. The goal now is not social change but pastoral concern. Political activism is replaced with the Church's traditional concern for good and charitable projects (Sugirtharajah 2002: 115).

Sugirtharajah is concerned about the silence of the oppressed peoples in the construction of a liberating theology. Because of this situation, it is necessary to move beyond and not only speak on behalf of the oppressed and dominated, but also to create spaces and to promote their own discourses about God and their situations. The role of Liberation Hermeneutics will be focused then, not only to talk in favour of the struggles of the marginalized, but also to give their voice a space between other voices that speak about God. Let them talk by themselves about themselves and not repeat what others, no matter how committed they are to a just cause, say about them. This is why the participation of the marginalized sector is important in the construction of theology. The community that is privileged in the discourse and practice of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics finds a space to speak.

In this regard, West (1995: 174) comments that "…the ordinary reader must be foregrounded if we are to understand liberation hermeneutics adequately and appropriately." Speaking in a context of struggle against apartheid, and reading the Bible in contexts that fight for liberation, West goes on, stating that "A factor which has particular relevance to the South African context is the growing recognition that the people must be allowed to speak for themselves" (West 1995: 174). Hermeneutics of Liberation cannot occur if those who are struggling for liberation cannot speak for themselves. We as theologians and biblical scholars can dedicate our work to speak *in favour of* or *promoting the struggles of* the impoverished, oppressed and marginalized, but must realize as well that the liberating process will never be complete until these groups raise their own voices to speak about the Bible, God and their contextual circumstances. In a reading of the Bible that looks for being contextual and liberating, it is necessary "…that ordinary readers join the discussion" (West 1995: 200).

The readers become an essential part in interpreting the text for liberation, especially as it has been understood in Latin America. Gerald West (1995: 161) points out how "…Croatto s the interests and questions of the interpreter in the interpretative process." The interests and questions of the people are vital so the discourses that come from theological constructions are accountable to their struggles.

The shift to the reader, and moving beyond the text or the text's context, is, West argues, a shift to contextualization (West 1995: 225). This shift is a challenge to the traditional ways of doing theology and biblical interpretation and allows the text to respond to more historical and material issues. Moving to the interpreter means therefore to move to his or her context. This allows us/one to respond to more historical and material questions, which are the ones that matter in most reading communities. Makhosazana K. Nzimande, in her Postcolonial reading of 1 Kings 21, states that "Imbokodo hermeneutics considers black women's histories as pertinent starting points in the interpretation of biblical texts. This resonates with Itumeleng Mosala's historical-materialist hermeneutics…" (Nzimande 2009: 225). In Hermeneutics of Liberation, the focus on the reader represents interpreting from his or her context.

In his work on Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation, Itumeleng Mosala addresses the question of context, arguing that, "In order to become a weapon of struggle for oppressed black people, black theology needs to relocate itself within the historical and cultural struggles of these people" (Mosala 1989: 4). One of his preoccupations is to warn about bias in South African Liberation Theology on premises of dominant Western Theology (Mosala 1989: 3). His work however also looks for presenting the South African context as the criterion for the construction of a liberating theology that is accountable to South Africans struggling against apartheid and other oppressions. In his review of the way the Bible has been read for Liberation in the South African context, West mentions how most of the representative theologians of this country, like Allan Boesak and Itumeleng Mosala, have a general commitment to read the text from within a particular situation of struggle (West 1995: 70, 74). A focus in the context is important to recover the history and memory of those who read (West 1995: 127-128); in addition, the context becomes the one that offers the concern to read text and the reality (West 1995: 164)

In Liberation Theology, history and reality are essential for the discovery of a liberating God and its words to his creation. Juan Luis Segundo, for example, mentions how important the context is when he argues that "…the idea of a liberating God cannot be separated from historical situations and actions…because no liberating God is revealed outside of such historical situations" (Segundo 1993: 101). Here, the concept of a God that reveals and acts in history is present, and this contributes to rescue the context of those who read the text. A theology of liberation, therefore, is not only perceived in history, but is a respondent to it. West addresses this issue when he claims that "Interpretation should produce practical relevant results…" and that "…the situation of the reader functions as a co-determinant in the communication process…" (West 1995: 62). The context plays a an important role when reading an ambiguous text like the Bible, that it even plays a decisive role of "last judge" between

one passage or the other when interpreting to a concrete reality. West, citing Croatto's reading of Galatians in terms of "gender equality", mentions how "the priority of one text over another arises from the reader's commitment to a context of struggle" (West 1995: 167). Context becomes the ethical judge when conflicting voices in the Bible have to be interrogated, being the guide to choose between one or other text and therefore one or other interpretation.

The privileging of readers, contexts, and therefore themes and texts in the Bible, at a certain point will enter into conflict, especially in the Third World, with European and North American interpretations of the Bible. Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics should have the capacity to offer new ways of reading the texts that can bring liberation and hope to the marginalized and dominated. Sugirtharajah, reflecting on the role of Postcolonialism, maintains that such an approach "enable(s) us to question the totalizing tendencies of European reading practices and interpret the texts on our own terms and read them from our specific locations." (Sugirtharajah 1998: 16). Specificity of location and the reader's own tools are central in Postcolonialism, and also become the important element in how impoverished communities engage with the text and find in it liberating inputs for their daily struggles. Reading with the communities, from their experiences and with their tools and knowledge frameworks, will most of the time create new ways to speak of God, the Bible and the context, so the conflict with totalizing, Western tendencies in terms of appropriation is almost inevitable. About this emancipating potency, Sugirtharajah mentions how "As an enquiry, it (Postcolonialism) instigates and creates possibilities, and provides the platform for the widest possible convergence of critical forces, of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural voices, to assert their denied rights and rattle the centre." (Sugirtharajah 2002: 13). The conflict with the centre, with the inherited ways of interpretation, understanding of reality, and assumption of one's identity, cannot be avoided when the option to speak is given to the marginalized groups. Context and readers, therefore, become an important part in the work in hermeneutics for liberation.

2.2. Biblical Text and Christian Tradition

Since the biblical text, and the Christian tradition that has emerged through its interpretation, has been important in several struggles for emancipation (and also in projects of oppression), the last element I want to consider in this section is how the Bible and Christian tradition are read from Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics to advocate liberating projects.

2.2.1. One Bible and different voices:

The first aspect offered by these two frameworks, and which I consider extremely important when talking about the Bible and liberation, is the fact that this sacred text speaks with different voices, which

many times are contradictory, making it difficult to find a sole liberating voice within it. Therefore, the first thing that needs to be said about the Bible when appropriated as a document that promotes projects of liberation, is that due to its complexity and plurality of voices, it also can be used to defend oppressive projects.

In terms of a South African Hermeneutics of Liberation, authors like Itumeleng Mosala have been very critical about the usage of the Bible for liberating projects without acknowledging the diversity of discourses within this text. According to Mosala "…the Bible is made up of a multiplicity of varying and often contradictory traditions that are a function of both a long history over which they were produced and a variety of situations that produced them" (Mosala 1989: 29). This author not only recognizes the complex process of composition of the biblical text, but also the different traditions and therefore contending voices that compose it. Mosala sees these voices are as a result of different political projects, which makes the text reflect a diversity of interests. He mentions that "…sociological and materialist exegeses of biblical texts have added to this understanding the role of contradictory and conflicting social and political interests, even within the same time frame or society, in the production of the Bible" (Mosala 1989: 29). From Mosala's point of view, the Bible reflects different political groups influencing the production of the text even at a same time of composition. Mosala (1989: 10) is clear that the Bible functions within this dynamic of diverse voices, and that biblical texts are products of such struggles. However, he also acknowledges that such dissonant voices have been encoded in the discourses of the powerful groups who were able to edit and establish the last form of the canonical texts:

> I argue…that biblical texts are products of contradictory and struggle-ridden conditions of production. Nevertheless, I also contend that the finished textual products are, in spite of their conditions of production, still cast in hegemonic codes…this raises the fundamental problem of how hermeneutical appropriation of hegemonic texts can be undertaken by non hegemonic sectors of contemporary societies (Mosala 1989: 10).

Mosala's preoccupation is centred in how "dominated" groups use literature produced by dominating sectors in their struggles for emancipation, which makes him point out the ambiguity and limits of the Bible for these projects (Mosala 1989: 8). Mosala (1989: 8), talking about the South African experience, states that "…biblical texts do not become suddenly politically supportive of the black struggle just because they are appropriated from its perspective. The relevance of the Bible in the black liberation struggle may be as much a negative factor as it is often a positive one". Because the Bible can support or oppose liberating projects, Mosala argues that in order to use the text for liberating struggles, making choices within the Bible and also within the present reality is necessary. His opinion

is that "to engage a biblical text in the light of the black struggle for liberation must be to take sides in and to connect with kindred struggles that were being waged in very ancient communities…" (Mosala 1989: 8). Here, Mosala connects the dynamics of the biblical text and the dynamics of his South African context, arguing that in order to interpret the Bible for liberation, choosing one side in the struggles reflected in the text and lived in the current context cannot be avoided. According to Mosala, "…it is liberating to recognize that not every God of every biblical text is on the side of the poor, nor is it desirable that this should be so" (Mosala 1989: 8). This author, then, makes evident one of the most transcendental characteristics of the Bible, especially for those who see this text as a tool for liberating struggles: that it contains both interests of those oppressed and those who oppress.

Authors like Gerald West recover Mosala's position, mentioning how for Mosala "the Bible "offers no certain starting point for a theology of liberation within itself" (West 1995: 118). West includes, as example of this, Mosala's work on Micah, where he argues that there "is simply too much de-ideoloization to be made before it can be hermeneutically straightforward in terms of the struggle for liberation" (West 1995: 118). Taking into consideration these ideas, the usage of the Bible in supporting liberation struggles becomes a complex task. Using the work of Mosala and Fiorenza, who privilege a socio-historic approach of the text in order to make it "useful" for liberating struggles and then free it from its patriarchal and upper-class interests, West (1995: 119) talks about the necessity that " the texts need to be dealt with in their socio-historic dimensions and contexts of composition".

Postcolonial Biblical Hermeneutics agrees with South African Liberation Hermeneutics in the idea of the Bible as an ambiguous text. Sugirtharajah, criticizing the way the Bible is used in Latin American Liberation Theology, mentions that "Postcolonialism is much more guarded in its approach to the Bible's serviceability. It sees the Bible as both safe and unsafe, and as a familiar and a distant text…" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 117). From a Postcolonial approach, at least in the one represented by Sugirtharajah, readers that hope to use the Bible for liberating projects need to be cautious, since this text seem to advocate different type of socio-political projects. In Sugirtharajah's words (1995: 117), "Postcolonialism sees the Bible as both a problem and a solution, and its message of liberation is seen (as) far more indeterminate and complicated". As Mosala does, Sugirtharajah considers the Bible with the capacity to support struggles for liberation, without hiding the fact that it also advocates oppression and domination. Using the book of Esther, Sugirtharajah exemplifies how he understands the Bible as a tool for liberation, showing that "Before the text can be mined for its liberative potential, for example in the person of Vasti, its hegemonic assumptions need to be exposed" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 251). In this sense, as Mosala does, Sugirtharajah warns about the ideological entanglements of the biblical texts and their limits and potentials within liberating struggles.

In this regard, Mosala and Sugirtharajah's position become challenging for Latin American Liberation Theology and Hermeneutics. Sugirtharajah mentions Pablo Richard, one of the most famous liberation theologians in Latin America, saying that "Pablo Richard maintains that "the problem is not the Bible itself, but the way it has been interpreted. The Bible gives us the testimony of the word of God, it is also the canon or criterion of discernment of the word of God today". There is an inherent Biblicism in its approach. The texts which speak of dehumanizing aspects are conveniently passed over" (2002: 114). Richard's affirmation of the Bible as misinterpreted and not as having a "problem" in itself in regards to liberation projects is strongly contested by Sugirtharajah, who criticizes the way that the Bible is selectively read in order to support a generalizing idea of the Bible as liberating. Sugirtharajah doubts the position which Latin American Liberation Theology defends; "ultimately it is in the Bible that the message of liberation is to be found, and it is recoverable through a variety of critical means" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 114). Instead, he prefers to advocate for a more complex appropriation of the text. This author defends Mosala's work, reminding that "Postcolonialism…understands the Bible and biblical interpretation as a site of struggle over its efficacy and meanings." (Sugirtharajah 2002: 117). Because of this dimension of the text, that Postcolonialism recognizes, Sugirtharajah mentions the issue of how "There is a danger in liberation hermeneutics making the Bible the ultimate adjudicator in matters related to morals and theological disputes" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 117).

Since the Bible's dynamics are so contested, Mosala argues about the importance to see the ideological elements that compose it as important when this text is used in liberation struggles:

> The notion that the Bible is simply the revealed "Word of God" is an example of an exegetical framework that is rooted in such (Western) idealist epistemology…it leads to a false notion of the Bible as non-ideological, which can cause political paralysis in the oppressed people who read it.… (Mosala 1989: 5-6)

For Mosala, acknowledging the ideological components of the Bible is transcendental so it can have potential for the liberation struggles, since resistance to read it that way "…leaves the privilege of a political reading of the Bible to the hegemonic sectors of society" (Mosala 1989: 6). Sugirtharajah follows this line when he says that "Postcolonial reading advocates the emancipation of the Bible from its implication in dominant ideologies both at the level of the text and at the level of interpretation" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 118). Both authors, interestingly, defend the idea that the Bible needs to be liberated so it can liberate others. It is important, therefore, in Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics, to understand the limits and resources the Bible offers in liberating struggles. Even though Latin American theologians have argued that the God of the Bible chooses the side of the poor, Mosala (1989: 16) says that "…the biblical truth that God sides with the oppressed is only one of the

biblical truths." Mosala's argument is one that I consider important to deal with the Bible and Liberation Hermeneutics. As Mark Brett notices (2000: 8), the Bible has played a role both in struggles for liberation and in struggles for oppression, an idea echoed by Mosala when he states that biblical texts have been used to both defend and violate human rights (Mosala 1989: 29). Even though he is committed to using the Bible for liberating struggles, or to be more precise, because of his commitment to this cause, Mosala (1989: 30) says that "the only adequate and honest explanation is that not all of the Bible is on the side of human rights or of oppressed and exploited people".

Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics contribute to seeing the text as ideological, where "ruling class interests evident in the Bible are converted into a faith that transcends social, political, racial, sexual and economic divisions" (Mosala 1989: 18). It is important to free the Bible of its "ahistoricity" (Mosala 1989: 18), not only in terms of its usage in our struggles for liberation, but also in its entanglements with the context and socio-political groups where it was composed. However, it is important to remember that in spite of the contestation within the text, the Bible is still a powerful text for theology or struggle, as West mentions about the praxis of people like Mosala, Boesak and Fiorenza (West 1995: 130). In order to be faithful to the contexts where we work, and recognizing the limits and possibilities of the Bible itself, I agree with Sugirtharajah, of the necessity to see the Bible as one among other liberating texts (Sugirtharajah 2002: 118). This aspect will not only liberate the Bible of the pressure that has been put on it by closing down its meaning as one committed exclusively to liberation and the cause of the oppressed, but also will make Christian tradition expand to other ways and sources to find answers for the challenges that our societies face today.

2.2.2. The Bible in projects of domination and liberation

One of the consequences of a Bible that has different voices, which could also be understood as different ideo-theological projects, is it can have the potential to be used by those who promote oppression and those who fight for emancipation. The Bible has become a tool that not only legitimates justice but also empowers those who create structures of domination. This idea has been very clear in the work of Postcolonialism, and as an example I want to cite Mark Brett, who argues that biblical texts are embedded in discourses of colonialism (Brett 2008: 2), and also that "the Bible has figured in resistance to colonialism" (Brett 2008: 8). However, before going to Postcolonialism, I want to begin by making a reference to Liberation Theology.

As I mentioned before, Liberation Theology has found in the Bible a "theological principle" that says that God privileges the impoverished and oppressed. According to Juan Luis Segundo, liberation

theologians privilege the Old Testament and within it the Exodus narrative because of one important reason:

> The Old Testament, and the Exodus event in particular, show us two central elements completely fused into one: i.e., God the liberator and the political process of liberation which leads the Israelites from bondage in Egypt to the promised land. In no other portion of scripture does God the liberator reveal himself in such a close connection with the political plane of human existence (Segundo 1993: 95).

Exodus becomes central in the argument of Liberation Theology, where God frees the Israelites from Pharaoh's bondage. From it, I agree, people can assume the idea that the God of the Bible, or at least the one in Exodus, is on the side of those who are exploited and oppressed[87]. However, this narrative is incomplete if the taking of the Canaanite land is not mentioned, and such an event can change the images of God and the projects of liberation that were highly supported before. Sugirtharajah notices how dangerous was the work of Liberation Theologians to propose Exodus as a liberating narrative, stating that "…in espousing and endorsing the Exodus as the foundational text for liberation in its early days, liberation hermeneutics failed to note that its suitability as a project had limited value and force" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 118; 2004: 260). Sugirtharajah makes clear how, no matter the best intentions of those who found in Exodus a liberating project of God for the oppressed and impoverished of their contexts, the narrative had a great limitation, and it was the killing and dispossession of Egyptians and Canaanites. Sugirtharajah, therefore, mentions that:

> …while liberation hermeneutics claimed that the Exodus was read from the point of view of the oppressed, it did not pause to think of the plight of victims who were at the receiving end of its liberative action, and who were forced to embark upon what Robert Allen Warrior calls "a reverse Exodus" from their own promised land (2002: 118).

The critique of Sugirtharajah is centred on the incapacity of Liberation Theology to see the consequences for the Canaanites due to the liberation of the Israelites. The point of Sugirtharajah is very important, especially in theological terms, since this author questions a discourse of a God who liberates certain people but kills the others, highlighting the point of how necessary it is to read the text from the perspective of the "humiliated people in the biblical and contemporary times" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 118). This little example serves to show how complex the biblical text is, and how careful we have to be when elaborating discourses about God and about liberation. The Exodus was a story used

[87] However, if analysed through ideological criticism, it could be argued that the story belongs to groups of power who reflect on their situation of exile and therefore see their coming back to their lands as God's liberating act, an argument that would not be that liberating. See for example Mark Brett (2000) and his description of the text used by Puritans to disinherit natives in North America.

not only by the Israelites coming to their land to dispossess those who did not go to exile, but also in later projects of colonization, where it was assumed by the Boers in South Africa and other groups who religiously legitimated the invasion of a land that was not theirs (Brett 2008: 10).

Postcolonialism, therefore, is a tool that contributes to both detect and criticize dominating projects in the text as we as in its interpretation (Sugirtharajah 2004: 4). Nevertheless, Itumeleng Mosala, a Liberation theologian, is one of the authors who finds in the text the promotion of oppressive projects. This author maintains that "…the texts of the Bible are already cast in hegemonic codes" (Mosala 1989: 6), emphasizing the power-laden notions that many stories in the Bible have. He advocates strongly for an ideological approximation to the biblical text in order to understand its oppressive projects, arguing that "…it is crucial…to recognize the presence of the oppressor and oppression in the text itself. It is fatal to mistake oppression for liberation and an oppressor for a liberator" (Mosala 1989: 26). Authors like Segovia, as well, claim that "the shadow of the empire in the production of ancient texts is to be highlighted" (Segovia 1998: 57), referring to the groups of power, national or foreign, that influenced the composition of biblical texts. However, he does not stop only in the text itself, but mentions the role of interpretation in projects of domination, pointing out as necessary that "the shadow of the empire in the production of modern readings of the ancient texts should also be underlined" (Segovia 1998: 60). Musa Dube is also aware of this dynamic of domination where the text and its interpretations have been entrapped. Working from a postcolonial and feminist point of view, she mentions the importance "…to understand the ideological influence of empires in biblical texts as well as in the missionary movements" (Dube 1997: 11). Boer, citing Ernst Bloch, refers to this quality of the biblical texts, saying that "…he assumes that by and large the dominant textual traditions are those of the official power, Priestly establishment and institutions – the ones who write, copy and preserve the text." (Boer 2005: 178). Phrases like the ones mentioned before demonstrate that there is a wide range of scholars who recognize the influence of powerful circles in the production of biblical texts. Sugirtharajah recognizes also this dynamic that defines the work of Postcolonialism as a criticism that "…focus (es) on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 25). It is clear that Postcolonialism approaches the biblical texts with suspicion, and this is one of its contributions for a critical Hermeneutics of Liberation. As criticism, this tool will allow one to study the biblical texts to discern their colonial entanglements and also to see most of it as emanating from colonial contacts (Sugirtharajah 2004: 251).

However, Postcolonialism goes beyond to contribute to the recovery of the voices of the marginalized and oppressed in these dominating projects. Sugirtharajah (2002: 21), for example,

mentions that this interpretative approach analyses "historical discourses, official documents, missionary reports", not only "to see how the colonized were represented" but also "how they resisted or accepted colonial values." According to this idea, Postcolonialism also looks to finding the active role of the marginalized in contexts of domination, focusing on how they reacted to the oppression experienced. In addition, Sugirtharajah proposes the need to demonstrate that there were also voices that resisted colonization, stating that "Postcolonial reading will also investigate interpretations which contested colonial interests and concerns" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 257). This element is also very important for a Hermeneutics of Liberation, since according to Sugirtharajah Postcolonialism it "will bring to the fore how the invaded, often caricatured as abused victims or grateful beneficiaries, transcended this image and wrested interpretations from the invaders, starting a process of self-discovery, appropriation and subversion" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 257). Postcolonialism, therefore, makes available the powerful discourses of resistance that emerged from the marginalized and dominated groups within the Bible and in later colonized contexts. Postcolonial Hermeneutics become, therefore, a tool to interrogate and challenge colonial interpretations (Sugirtharajah 2004: 255). Sugirtharajah (2004: 255) argues that other aims of this approach are to "draw attention to the inescapable effects of colonialism and colonial ideologies on interpretative works such as commentarial writings…which help to (re) inscribe colonial ideologies and consolidate the colonial presence". For Hermeneutics that want to promote liberating projects, unveil agendas and discourses of domination it is important to demonstrate the ways of control of those in positions of power and also the usual manipulation and falsehood of their discourses. The Bible, therefore, not only contains texts that demonstrate struggles of different classes and groups, but also those that have been appropriated in history to legitimize domination and promote liberation.

2.2.3. Reinterpreting the Bible and the tradition

The last element I want to mention in regards to what I consider the contributions of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics for liberating projects is the attitude towards reinterpreting the text in order to make alternative voices speak and therefore promote alternative interpretations from those that have been elaborated in dominating circles.

Postcolonialism, for example, approaches the text to try to hear the marginalized and silenced voices not only in the writing of the Bible but also in the history of interpretation. Sugirtharajah is one of the authors who relates Postcolonialism with this project, arguing that such an approach "will attempt to resurrect lost voices and causes which are distorted or silenced in the canonized text" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 251). The approach, therefore, will follow a method that will contribute to making noticeable other discourses and theological ideas within the text that can be used to promote different readings of the

Bible and our realities. Paying attention to lost voices and causes has to engage therefore with reconstructive readings of texts (Sugirtharajah 2004: 251). According to Sugirtharajah (2004: 251-252), "Postcolonial reading will reread the texts from the perspective of postcolonial concerns such as liberation struggles of the past and present…" being sensitive, for example, to "subaltern and feminist elements embedded in the texts." To recover marginalized voices and to read the text and the reality from neglected perspectives will be a way to engage with liberating interpretations of the Bible and also emancipating social projects.

Mark Brett, working in Postcolonialism, sees this approach also as a way to promote different readings of the Bible and the construction of new images of God. Brett's point of departure is the way the Bible has been used to construct projects of domination. He maintains that, "Biblical texts were often used as colonial instruments of power, exploited with pre-emptive and self-interested strategies of reading" (Brett 2008: 31). Brett, therefore, acknowledges how the Bible has been entrapped in a project of control and oppression. Because of this, he argues that with his work in Postcolonialism he plans to "provide fresh interpretations of key texts and themes thrown up by the history of colonization, in the hope that the decolonization of God might still be possible" (Brett 2008: 31). For a liberating hermeneutics, Brett's words become really important since they recognize the need to reread the biblical tradition in a way that is distanced from the powerful discourses of domination, understanding also how necessary it is that these re-readings of the text re-shape the theological discourses and images of God that have been widely spread by groups in power. For Brett, Postcolonialism offers the possibility to engage in a "reconsideration of biblical traditions, both their production and reception, in order to discover less distorted habits of thinking and acting…" (Brett 2008: 1). Brett recognizes, as I mentioned before, how complex the process of the composition of the Bible is, and in addition, based on his research on Australian colonization, recognizes the negative consequences of its stories and of how they have been interpreted.

Based on Sugirtharajah's and Brett's work, it is clear that Postcolonialism offers Hermeneutics of Liberation a way to challenge the dominating discourses and projects within the biblical text, including the history of interpretation in order to give preference to marginalized subjects and their experiences. This exercise demands that certain actions and ideas are assumed. Sugirtharajah (2004: 258), for example, reminds his readers about the necessity to ask new questions of the biblical texts. He mentions that elements related to the groups of people who have the power to interpret the stories, control their meaning, decide the texts that are read, and determine the ethical effect of interpretation, have to be included among the questions that need to be asked (Sugirtharajah 2004: 259). Sugirtharajah's questions are mostly related to power, an element that is central in discussions about

oppression and emancipation. His postcolonial approach, in my opinion, will not only discern the power struggles within the biblical narratives, but also between the groups of readers who use the Bible to legitimate their projects.

Another movement that Postcolonial criticism requires from a liberating hermeneutics project is to question the Christian tradition and its imposition as unique valid religious discourse. Sugirtharajah again offers elements to deal with this issue, arguing that Latin American Liberation Hermeneutics "…still operates within the Judaeo-Christian notion of what religion is" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 115). Even though he is criticizing religion and the participation of the people's resources in the production of religious discourses (Conff Sugirtharajah 2002: 116), his position can be used also to call for a wider theological framework to read the biblical text and also respond to our realities. Although Sugirtharajah recognizes the importance and relevance of the biblical text, he is very critical about its centrality, suggesting that "In an age when many people's traditional sources of moral authority, sacred texts – the Bible among them – may not be the only place to look for answers to abstract and existential problems" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 257).

The hermeneutics for liberating projects that I am trying to elaborate here, although it takes seriously the importance of the Bible for the Costa Rican, as well as other contexts, is committed to "decentralize" the sources for liberating inputs, seeing the Bible and Christianity together with other religious sources and experiences of liberation. Such will assume a critical instead of apologetic position in front of Christian tradition, and avoid in that sense Sugirtharajah's criticism of Latin American Liberation Theology, because of its attempts to redeem the Church and its past colonial atrocities through the very book which perpetuated them" (Sugirtharajah 2002: 117). The Bible will continue as a source of liberation (See West 1995: 159), although appropriated now from a different perspective. An example of this comes from Sugirtharajah's work, who reads the Exodus from the Canaanites point of view (Sugirtharajah 2004: 261), and whose understanding is that the notion of liberation is found in a revelation that emerges not only from the Bible and the Church but also from "other sacred texts and contemporary secular events" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 262).

Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics, put into conversation, become important elements to understand the necessity to reread the biblical text and revise the history of interpretation of this book, in search of a more emancipating and dignifying theological discourse. The need to include other voices in the process, especially of the marginalized and oppressed within and without the text, is highlighted here, and the commitment to "speak about God" in a different, less hegemonic and colonial way, is assumed.

3. Dealing with socio-economic injustice in the Costa Rican context: a reading of Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics

Now that I have analyzed on Genesis 47.13-26, the Costa Rican context, and the Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, the next step is to put these three elements into conversation to respond to issues of socio-economic injustice. I mention first how I appropriate Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of postcolonial and liberation hermeneutics, then do the same about the Costa Rican context, and finish by connecting the two spaces and illuminating each, denounce socio-economic oppression and promote projects of economic justice.

3.1 Genesis 47.13-26 in the light of Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics.

As described in the second section of this chapter, I have recovered three main elements offered by Postcolonial and liberation Hermeneutics that I think important to interpret the biblical texts in order to promote projects of liberation. Choosing the side of the oppressed and marginalized, paying attention to the community of readers and their context, and engaging in exercises of reinterpretations and reconstructions of texts and images of God, are central elements of these two approaches that I consider valuable to interpret Genesis 47.13-26 and any other text of the Bible.

In terms of the first aspect, Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics requires that I read the text from the perspective of the dominated and oppressed. As I described in Chapter One of this thesis, in Genesis 47.13-26 it is clear that, on the literary level, those who suffer exploitation, marginalization and injustice are the Egyptians. They are the ones who are dispossessed, enslaved and introduced to a structural system that will ensure their submission to Pharaoh and the rest of Egyptian authorities. In this interpretative movement, I distance myself from the Christian tradition, which tends to give preference to Israel and Israelites, like Joseph, when approaching the biblical texts. Here, I follow Mosala's call to take sides when interpreting texts if we want to claim that our reading of the Bible is interested in liberating projects. In addition, I assume Sugirtharajah's when this author states that "…God, too, takes sides and goes against his own people (Biblical Israel) when they turn power and wealth into the ultimate purpose in life" (Sugirtharajah 2004: 255). My choice to interpret from the perspective of the Egyptian peasants is ideological and theological. It demonstrates a central element of my faith, which is to believe in a divinity and religious project that are positioned in the struggles of those who seek justice, a preference that is reflected in my election of the Postcolonial and Liberation frameworks. In terms of the polarization between Israelites and Egyptians in the texts, I my positioning with the Egyptians is based on class struggle and not on ethnicity. As I mentioned before, I reject any preference to a position on the side of biblical Israelites just because of their belonging to such people. I

follow a criterion of class struggle, where Pharaoh and Joseph, Egyptian and Israelite, belong to oppressive sectors that impoverish and dominate others through religious, political and economic structures. My position in favour of the Egyptians in Genesis 47.13-26 is based on the same grounds that I would assume when I read Exodus 1, where the Israelites are oppressed and exploited by Pharaoh.

Selecting the Egyptians as a "preferred option" to read the text implies that I position myself in the struggle that they might be representing. After exploring what has been said about the socio-historic conditions of the passage, it is difficult to determine or propose the groups and context behind the story. Because of this, it is uncertain who could have been represented in the story through the characterization of the Egyptians. In spite of this, I have argued that due to the literary and rhetorical level of the story, where the point of view is not very clear, It could be said that Genesis 47.13-26 is trying to show the negative impact that the monarchy and its tributary system have brought to the Israelites. From this perspective, the project represented by the Egyptians is one that rejects the economic abuse and religious manipulation that the state and the temple used to enslave the people. The role that denounces socio-economic exploitation and the religious legitimation of it is one of the elements that I want to recover from the story. My position, then, is with people who live under socio-economic pressure and religious manipulation due to the unjust actions and projects of the rulers. In addition, my project is to denounce such reality, as I suggest that the text does. This is the liberating struggle that I find in the story, and therefore I have to assume it if I want to be faithful to the interpretative frameworks I have selected to read the text and my context.

The second element offered by Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics is the one that deals with the privilege offered to readers and context in the interpretive process. This aspect is related to the first one, where there is a preference for people who live in conditions of marginalization and where their experience is important to define what liberation means for them. I plan to deal with this dimension of the interpretation of the text in the last section of this chapter, using the Contextual Bible Study methodology as an attempt to hear the voices of the communities, their discourses about God, and the appropriation of the text for their own situation. However, I want to mention here that I have tried to bridge the Costa Rican context to the literary and socio-historic dimensions of Genesis 47.13-26 to offer resources to Costa Ricans so they can reflect on the socio-economic issues in their country.

My position, which I describe in the next section, is that there are potential connections between both realms, and that potentially empowering readings can emerge from the encounter of the two in a search for socio-economic justice. However, it is important to clarify that I prioritize the experience of the readers and their contextual situation above what the text can offer them. I believe

that even though the Christian tradition prefers to find in Joseph a character who Christians should identify with, most readers of the Bible, and therefore many in the Costa Rican context, would find similarities in their life experiences and those of the Egyptians. The socio-economic dynamics that Genesis 47.13-26 reflects through its narrative dimension, especially the ones related to issues of tax, debt-slavery and impoverishment, could resonate in the experience of Costa Ricans in a country that has been exposed to neoliberalism and the negative consequences this system produces in the lives of the most vulnerable ones. The attempt, with the study of Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican context in the four chapters of this thesis, including the construction of a tentative CBS, is to offer an "access" to the Bible and the reality of marginalized readers so they can engage with issues of socio-economic injustice. It is a resource that has been created in consideration of them and which needs to be shaped by their engagement with it.

Finally, the last aspect I want to reflect on in regards to Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics is related to the project of rescuing the marginalized voices in text and context. This exercise attempts to create a new theology and image of God that care for the dignification of the marginalized and oppressed. In terms of the literary level of Genesis 47.13-26, I think that it is important to recognize the resisting role played by the Egyptians in their difficult socio-economic situation. They challenge Joseph's actions in verses 15 and 19, denouncing the silence and immobility of the rulers in a time of emergency. This voice, which I think could underlie a hidden critique of the monarchy, could represent one of those silenced discourses mentioned above and which Postcolonialism and Hermeneutics of Liberation try to recover it. However, I also think that there is a game of representation within the text. In verse 25, the Egyptians speak again, but this time they thank Joseph for having been disposed and enslaved. The discourse here is far from being a resisting project, and instead it projects the acceptance and submissiveness of a dominated people. I think that this verse reflects on the way the writers who are in favour of the powerful try to project and represent the dominated people.

The aspect of representation is very important to discern the voices of the oppressed in the biblical text and the work of the groups of power who tried to silence them. Talking about the literary dimension of the biblical texts from a Postcolonial perspective, Musa Dube (1997: 16) argues that an analysis of this aspect "may focus on the construction of characters, geography, travellers, gender construction, unspoken intentions, to highlight how this works in justifying the domination of one by another." The notion of "literary construction" is essential here to understand the biblical characters as portrayed by those who wrote the stories, which affects the way such characters are read in the interpretation process. In addition, Dube points out that these constructions are not innocent, and that characterization is ideologically biased in order to support projects of domination. Dube continues,

saying that "Usually these narrative texts construct both the colonizer and the colonized to accept the legitimacy of their respective positions…the literary constructions of/in colonizing texts, that is, texts designed to take possession of the minds and lands of those who are different" (Dube 1997: 16). The aspect of legitimacy is raised here, and how the narratives are elaborated in a way where dominators and dominated play a role that benefits those in power and strengthen the unjust dynamics of submission. Texts that come from the circles of power, that in the case of the Bible seem to be the majority, are designed, for many reasons, to legitimize the rule of the elites and powerful groups. I consider that the Joseph story as I defined it in Chapter Two is an example of Dube's argument. In addition, I also believe that Genesis 47.13-26 is an attempt to respond to legitimating constructions.

Roland Boer, citing the work of Ernst Bloch, mentions how this author thinks that the powerful classes are "the ones who impose ideas, political and economic domination, and negative representations of the people" (Boer 2005: 178-179). Although I do not think that a negative representation occurs in Genesis 47.25, I do believe that the text is reflecting the type of negative representations that portray certain collectives as the dominators want them to be. However, Bloch's work is important in the attempt to find alternative voices in the texts. He finds in the negative representations of characters "the possibility of opposing the hierocratic system of control and oppression…" (Boer 2005: 179). In his interpretation of Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16, Bloch finds a rebellious and challenging voice that has been silenced by the narrator of the story, but which is sufficient to show the contesting projects within the text. According to Boer:

> For Bloch, an echo of political rebellion reverberates through the text. Not only does the punishment itself signal this, but the perpetual recurrence of the Israelite's grumblings throughout the chapter indicates for Bloch a subversive, rebellious, anti-Yahweh voice that has been turned into something else – the sign of disobedience and recalcitrance on the part of the people themselves (Boer 2005: 178).

The "demonization" of those who rebel against Moses is a key for Bloch in order to find subversive voices in the text. He considers these voices important to find echoes of groups that are in contestation with those who have the power to dominate the society and create the stories. Boer continues describing Bloch's attempts to recover marginal and contesting voices within the biblical tradition. According to Boer (2005: 179), Bloch "focuses on the murmuring of the people against Moses, the trenchant prophetic critique of political economies, the early form of Christianity rejected and persecuted by the early church…" as indicators of "a healthy and revolutionary force or tradition in the Bible". Bloch's position interestingly attempts to trace marginalized and silenced voices within the text, especially when these are approached taking into account the ideological discourses contending in the

stories and the power of the elites to control the final form of the texts. However, the critique against Bloch that Boer elaborates, shows that it is important to engage critically with the possibility of finding alternative voices in the Bible. Boer (2005: 179) maintains that "…properly subversive voices – those of women, the economically abused and exploited, outsiders and heretics – are inevitably piecemeal and fragmentary, with no necessary coherence, if they get any chance of appearing at all..." For Boer the possibility that the editors or final compilers of the biblical texts imposed their vision on the documents, eliminating any contesting version of history or reality, is very high, something that would limit the proposal of Bloch. Boer (2005: 179) argues that he "…cannot help but wonder whether the truly subversive voices have not been entirely effaced from the text, although Bloch would argue that such effacement is never complete, that traces are always left behind…"

Boer exemplifies this by referring to a work that Mark Brett published on Genesis, where the main idea is the presence of resistance of certain groups of people to the Israelite officials of the Persian government. Boer (2005: 176) argues that:

> …the tensions and problems Brett finds represented in the text are not so much ones of dominating and subversive voices but of different positions within a ruling class situation, even if the voice he finds in Genesis runs against that of Ezra for explicitly economic reasons…here we have a dialogue between priests and priestly groups.

This kind of dialogue between priestly classes pointed out by Boer gives a helpful explanation of what I think could be going on in Genesis 47.13-26, where, as in Chapter One of this thesis I mention Houston's work on 1 Samuel 8 to understand how the discussions within the text could be reflecting conflicts between powerful groups. Even though Boer has a strong point regarding the proposals of Bloch and Brett, I still believe that the Bible has enough complex discursive dynamics to give credit to Bloch's and Brett's proposition and therefore to trace different and contesting voices within the text.

To read Genesis 47.13-26 from Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics, Bloch's intuitions can be very constructive. Even though they do not really apply to the way I find subversive voices in Genesis 47.13-26, they are an interesting guideline to identify the contending voices in the Bible. The possibility that Genesis 47.13-26 intentionally presents Joseph as "preserver of life", could be part of the work of editors who try to hide the denunciation that is upon his shoulders for dispossessing and enslaving the Egyptians. I think, however, that it is an idea of Gramsci that can contribute to a description of what I find in Genesis 47.13-26. According to Boer (2005: 168) "…Gramsci argues that a dominant hegemony works by articulating and spreading a specific set of cultural assumptions, beliefs, ways of living, and so on that are assumed to be normal, accepted by people as the universally valid

way of living". Such ideas of Gramsci, in my opinion, are present in Bloch's argument. I think that what Genesis 47.13-26 is trying to reflect, especially in verse 25, is that those who are reacting against the hegemonic groups have noted this discourse and are laying it down as false. Verse 25 shows the "set of cultural assumptions, beliefs, ways of living" that the powerful want other groups to assume. The negative actions of Joseph, which contradict such assumptions and beliefs, is a way to mimic the discourse of the powerful but suggest a different meaning, in this case show these ideas as false and contradictory to reality. The discourse that emerges from here, which resists and deconstructs an oppressive discourse to use it against its producers, can be considered an instrument to reinterpret the image of Joseph, of the God that supports him, and of the socio-economic projects that have used this text to promote injustice.

Finding voices of resistance in Genesis 47.13-26 that allow a change in the Christian tradition regarding Joseph and the images of God that support socio-economic exploitation, is useful to promote liberating projects in the Costa Rican context. Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics of the Bible have played an important role interrogating the text and expanding its meaning to allow other voices to speak and other images of God to emerge.

3.2 The Costa Rican context in the light of Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics

In the same way that I have dealt with Genesis 47.13-26 from a Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics perspective, a consideration of the Costa Rican context through these two approaches is important and highlights how the text could be read in the reality of socio-economic injustice this country faces.

First, Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics require that a reading of the Bible in any context, in this case the Costa Rican, assumes the liberating project of those who are oppressed and marginalized. As I described at the beginning of this chapter, Costa Rica has faced a deterioration in the socio-economic conditions of the population that has caused around 25% percent of the population to live in poverty and extreme poverty. Therefore, a reading of the Bible in this context that wants to construct projects of liberation will have to choose the side of those who have been affected by the structural injustice that is lived in the country. To speak about liberation in Costa Rica, it is necessary to denounce the systematic oppression within neoliberalism and the consequences it is producing in the lives of the most vulnerable people. The reading of the text in this context will have to commit to the denunciation of the socio-economic model that has been implemented for more than thirty years, and will have to pronounce a theological discourse where the God of the Bible is understood as one which requires a dignifying life for its creation. Postcolonial and Hermeneutics of Liberation in Costa Rica will

have to take a position that assumes the struggles of those groups who fight for access to health, education, housing, dignifying jobs, water and electricity, and foods of primary need.

When reading Genesis 47.13-26, for example, Costa Ricans will be invited to reflect on the Egyptians' experience of dispossession and enslavement, and be able to find an echo of their situation at the literary level of the story. In addition, they should be able to learn the role played by the temple-state system in the socio-economic chaos lived by the Israelites in the monarchic period as a way to consider the structural systems that have been created in different times to impoverish and dispossess the masses. Since the text seems to want to expose the abuses of the rulers and speak against their oppression, Costa Ricans may be able to find in the text connections with their own struggles for socio-economic justice, evoking from the struggles of the past their current fight for emancipation and dignity. The invitation for Costa Ricans will be to take the side of the Egyptians and to reflect on the Bible and the socio-economic dynamics of their reality from the perspective of the impoverished and oppressed, which in many cases is their own experience.

As the other requirement of Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics is to interpret text and reality from the perspective of the readers and their context, it is necessary to give Costa Ricans dealing with socio-economic justice a safe space to reflect about their situation. This is supported by the CBS that is dealt with in the last section of the chapter. In terms of the role that the context plays in the reading of the text, it is important to recognize that Costa Rica has all the characteristics of a neo-colonized country. According to Sugirtharajah (2004: 247) Postcolonial criticism is a

> textual and praxiological practice initially undertaken by people who were once part of the British, European and American Empires, but now have some sort of territorial freedom while continuing to live with burdens from the past and enduring newer forms of economic and cultural colonialism.

In this sense, this approach is useful for a context like Costa Rica, which is, undergoing a new form of economic and cultural colonialism. Because of this, the reading of the text in this context has to acknowledge this reality of foreign and local domination.

Finally, rereading of texts and reconstructions of the images of God is necessary in a context like the Costa Rican one. The Bible has been rarely used for social struggles, especially in relation to the economic dimension, because Liberation Theology, one of the strongest theological movements in Latin America, found little echo in the Costa Rican churches and Christian movements. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the Catholic Church, which is the largest religious institution in the country and the one related to its political affairs, has given the struggles for social justice a marginal aspect

that reflects the way its ministers and affiliates read the Bible and understand Christianity. A Bible that was created from the experiences of struggle of the Israelites, for the elites and also for the marginal peoples, has to be recovered in Costa Rica. In addition, the idea that the Bible and religion can be relevant to history needs to be emphasized and spread, especially in the context of the struggle for socio-economic justice.

Costa Ricans that engage with the reading of the Bible, through CBS and other methods, will have the opportunity to elaborate their own discourses about God, which emanate from their readings of the Bible, their forms of creating knowledge, and the realities where they live. It is important that they take the responsibility to reflect from their faith in their own context so the interpretations of the Bible and images of God can become relevant to the situations that they experience.

3.3. Connecting Genesis 47.13-26 with the Costa Rican context

After having explored how the Costa Rican context and Genesis 47.13-26 could be understood when reflected on from Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics, this section gives a brief description of the connections between text and context and provides the reasons why both could illuminate each other.

The first connection that I find between text and context is that both saw a socio-economic change emerge after a moment of crisis. Genesis 47.13-26 and the Joseph story in general seem to reflect the transition from a more egalitarian society to the establishment of a monarchic institution based in a temple-state (see Chapter One). This transition would have emerged for different reasons, among which has been included corruption of the previous leadership and international pressure. In the same way, the Welfare State that was established in Costa Rica at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the1950s saw its end due to accusations of corruption and pressure from international and local elites, and this caused a transition to neoliberalism at the beginning of the 1980s. Both text and context seem to have faced a critical moment that was used to demand a change in the model, a step that reflected contestation and debate.

Another aspect where I find similarity between what could have happened in the context reflected in Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican reality is related to the promotion of the new system as salvific. The monarchy was introduced in Israel by some sectors as an institution given by God and necessary to save the population. The king and the institution he represented became God's instrument to guarantee the well-being of the land, and divine punishment, or blessing, began to be a result of the monarch's actions (See for example Wittenberg 1993: 17). In the same way, neo-colonialism was implemented in Costa Rica as a system that would save the country from the socio-economic "chaos"

caused by the corruption of the state and the economic crisis of the international community. Advocates of neoliberalism would defend this system as the guarantee for social and economic development for everyone, and still today claim that neoliberalism is the key to overcome poverty and other social problems.

The legitimation referred to here would have been very difficult if those powerful groups behind it had not had access to the main means of communication. As I explained also in Chapter One, those wanting to legitimize the monarchy and its temple-state system would have belonged to the court and other elite groups. They would have used religious and political ceremonies to implant their ideological positions among the population, and created written records that supported the discourses they wanted the people to assume. In the same way, neoliberalism in Costa Rica had the advantage and those who supported it were able to pay for advertisements on television, radio and other public media, thus being able to access a large audience and to transmit their ideological ideas to the population. This tool related to means of communication unites text and context and is part of those elements used by elites to promote the socio-economic changes they are seeking.

Another element that Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican context share is the participation of foreign powers in the economic systems embraced. It has been argued that the Israelite peasantry before the monarchic period had rejected the temple-state system that prevailed in lands like Egypt and Canaan. For many authors, the egalitarian society before the monarchy that was maintained among Israelites was a project that emanated from circles of the population that rejected the abuses committed by other peoples in other lands. The introduction of the monarchy in Israel represented to some sectors of the society an acceptance of foreign ways, and gave in some circles the impression that the monarchy and its system was not Israelite but the embracement of a strange way of organization. Even though there is a lot of contestation around this presentation of Israel before and after the monarchy, it could be said that Israel, at a certain moment in history, undergoes a socio-economic transition that made the country organize more similarly to its neighbours. It cannot be forgotten that political pressures related to war and domination caused several changes in the socio-economic organization of Israel. Something similar could be argued for the Costa Rican context, where a socio-economic model was developed which was not purely “capitalistic” nor “communist” but which shared certain aspects of both. At a certain time, international pressure that came from institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were able to impose their economic policies on the country. Costa Rica also now experiences a reality of neo-colonization, where its cultural, economic and political reality are strongly co-opted and imposed on by other imperialistic nations, the United States and others.

The implementation of new socio-economic systems in Israel and Costa Rica provoked a change in customs and laws. In terms of the Israelite reality, laws had to be created in order to control the socio-economic chaos caused by the systems of taxation, corvée and tithing. People started to live in economic distress, which made it difficult to practice the cultural requirements of solidary with those with financial and social problems, elements that co-opted the support among the population. Issues of debt and slavery were raised and free-interest loans and the prohibiting of taking slaves had to be re-elaborated in a context where loans with high-rate interest and debt slavery became common. In the same way, the introduction of neoliberalism in Costa Rica promoted changes in legislation and culture. The population has seen many of the social rights achieved in the past disappear due to the economic policies implemented by national and international authorities. Laws that protected health, education, housing and the environment, for example, have been re-elaborated so they obey the dynamics of the market, an issue that has a strong impact on the most vulnerable of the population. In addition, families have started to struggle more to find ways of living dignifying lives, something that has affected the culture of solidarity that was common practice in little towns and communities. As West (1993: 15) points out, "The Western industrialized world's emphasis on the individual shapes us all, and so it is easy to lose a sense of community consciousness". This has been one of the many cultural changes in Costa Rica, accelerated by globalization and neoliberalism.

A further common aspect that Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican context have is the socio-economic deterioration of its population after the transition they experienced. Among the clearest social impacts that the monarchy and neoliberalism produced was the acceleration in the impoverishment of their populations. In Genesis 47.13-26 it is clear how the people living under the temple-state system were dispossessed of their means of survival and made slaves by small elites with great power. The 90% of means of production, related specially to land and cattle, became owned by approximately 5% to 7% of the population. Tax, tithe and corvée were extracted from the people, who would see their resources reduced and their risk of becoming slaves increased. As a structural system, neoliberalism has had a similar impact on the socio-economic conditions of Costa Ricans. The weakening of public institutions that guaranteed that everyone access to education, health, basic alimentation, a dignifying job, and services like water and electricity has created a socio-economic chaos in the population. In addition, corruption and transnational companies have stolen resources from the people in general while defending their actions as services to the country. Both text and context reflect the reduction of the possibilities of a dignifying life for most of the population, having as one of the causes the structural system implemented by the rulers.

The final aspect that I want to mention briefly is that the transitions in economic systems have not been accepted without resistance. In terms of Genesis 47.13-26, I find a voice that challenges the abuses of the monarchy and its temple-state system. In that way, this text would emphasize how narratives like the one of the Joseph story, which in its own dynamics reflects contending voices around the issue of monarchy, challenging the system and its consequences. This text reflects a debate that goes along with the Old Testament tradition, where there is a strong critique of the systemic oppression imposed by the rulers against the majority of the population. In the same way, neoliberalism has found strong resistance among social groups, who have understood how dangerous this system can be for the social stability of the country. Many social organizations, few of them religious, have created campaigns and movements in order to resist the introduction of neoliberalism in the country and to reverse the policies that already have been implemented. This struggle is still going on, and I believe it is an echo of what can be found in the Bible in terms of voices contending around socio-economic issues.

This brief connection between text and context comes from my own understanding of Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican reality. I assume it as an interpretative key and resource to start a discussion about issues of socio-economic justice using the Bible in Costa Rica. The next section, which is centred in the dynamics of CBS, assumes the challenge of bridging all the academic discussions developed in the thesis with the experience and knowledge of the communities, in the search for a theological discourse and faith praxis that responds to socio-economic injustice from a liberating perspective.

4. Contextual Bible Study: Bridging text, context and interpretative frameworks.

I began this chapter by describing in general terms the most important socio-economic aspects of the Costa Rican context, giving also a brief overview of how the Bible has been used in a reality of socio-economic injustice. In addition, I describe some of the characteristics of the Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics of the Bible, highlighting the tools that they offer to engage with liberating projects in Costa Rica. This last section deals with Contextual Bible Study methodology, which is an instrument that has developed a useful methodology that enables at reading of Genesis 47.13-26 and the Costa Rican context from a Liberation and Postcolonial perspective

The method of Contextual Bible Study, as practiced by the UJAMAA Centre in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, is in my consideration a tool that can contribute to a reading of Genesis 47.13-26 in the Costa Rican context of socio-economic injustice from a liberating perspective. In this section, I begin with a description of the origins and presuppositions of Contextual

Bible Study methodology, mentioning the needs that encouraged its creation and also its main ideo-theological principles. After this, I briefly describe the steps and other considerations that are assumed in the CBS process, and end by offering a sample of Contextual Bible study for the Costa Rican context, using Genesis 47.13-26 as the main text to deal with socio-economic injustice.

4.1. Origins and Presuppositions of South African Contextual Bible Study method

4.1.1. The Beginnings of CBS:

The CBS method originates with the creation of the U Centre, formerly known as the Institute for the Study of the Bible, which was founded by Gunther Wittenberg in 1989 (Ntshingila 2000: 15). Wittenberg was a Lutheran pastor who became very interested in offering grass-roots communities biblical and theological tools to deal with their realities (Ntshingila 2000: 15). In the mid-1980s, he travelled to Brazil and visited liberation theologians such as Milton Schwantes, and engaged with the Popular Reading of the Bible, a movement that gave Wittenberg an idea of how to work with communities in order to address their realities while using the biblical text (Ntshingila 2000: 15). Because of this experience, and the reality of suffering and exploitation in South Africa, Wittenberg decided to found, in collaboration with scholars like Gerald West, an institute that would reunite communities and socially committed scholars to read the Bible to interpret the context where they lived, at that time, the reality of apartheid (Ntshingila 2000: 15-16). It was within the initiative of this institute that the Contextual Bible Study methodology was born.

Gerald West, one of the pioneers of this methodology, mentions how "Contextual Bible Study is a form of Liberation Hermeneutics that emerged in South Africa in the 1980s" (West 2014: 2), with the purpose to "search the Word of God for a message that is relevant to what we are expecting in South Africa today" (West 1993: 7). The "today" mentioned by West in this quotation was the reality of apartheid, so Contextual Bible Study was created as tool to reflect on this and other realities of exploitation. The task, therefore, was to discern "God's voice" specifically in the South African context, and also as expressed by those who were suffering the consequences of the impoverishing and oppressing regime.

The term "contextual" comes from the preoccupation to reflect in the reality where the text is read. According to West (2014: 2), this word was selected as strategic to deal with the apartheid state

and its oppressive policies. According to this author, "…the term 'contextual' as a designation is an accident of our South African history. The South-African apartheid state, with its overt theological foundation, demonised Liberation Theology and relentlessly detained anyone associated with such forms of theology" (West 2014: 2). As a consequence this, "contextual" became a strategic word that would allow the methodology to function without the intervention or suspicion of the government. In this regard, West (2014: 2) suggests that "The term 'contextual theology' was coined to subvert the apartheid state's efforts and became 'an umbrella term embracing a variety of particular or situational theologies' in South Africa". Contextual Bible Study, therefore, would be a liberation hermeneutics tool destined to cope, from a Biblical and situational perspective, with the reality of apartheid.

Gunther Wittenberg, the founder of the institute which ended up developing the CBS methodology, states that the Institute for the Study of the Bible was a way of showing his concern "…about hearing the Bible speak to real-life situations on the one hand; on the other…about hearing what the oppressed find meaningful in the Bible" (Wittenberg 1993: 9). The beginning of the CBS methodology was deeply rooted in a preoccupation to read the Bible and speak about God from a particular context (in this case the South African), and to include as active members of this interpretive process those who belonged to the most impoverished and oppressed communities.

Gerald West agrees with Wittenberg in this purpose of the CBS, arguing that it was developed for the need to study the Bible contextually (West 1993: 8). However, the method also had the purpose of giving participants certain skills that come from the academy in order to read the Bible in a more critical way. This was another need identified by West at the beginning of the implementation of the methodology, where he noticed the specific need for Bible study by people (West 1993: 8). Another key element of CBS was the recognition that both socially committed scholars and untrained readers could contribute with insightful resources to the interpretation of the Bible. According to West (2014: 2), the CBS methodology is a space where "socially engaged biblical scholars and ordinary readers of the Bible collaborate in the interpretive process, each bringing different sets of critical resources to the interpretive process". The CBS method became a work where diverse types of readers of the Bible, including those trained in the field and those who read it without any academic preparation, study the text carefully to respond to the contexts where they lived.

As I mentioned briefly at the beginning of this section, the South African CBS methodology was inspired by the work done by Carlos Mesters in the Centro de Estudios Biblicos in Brazil (West 2014: 2), which was overtly contextual and fundamentally preoccupied with socio-economic realities, as happened, in the beginnings of Latin American Liberation Theology. However, the idea of Liberation Hermeneutics as an interpretive paradigm that focused only in socio-economic realities was challenged

by feminist sectors, which argued that "patriarchy was another foundational system of exploitation" (West 2014: 6). In view of this type of criticism, Biblical hermeneutics has been expanding little by little its areas of work, assuming now "an array of domains, including gender, caste, HIV, disability, sexuality and ecology but always from the margins of these domains" (West 2014: 6). The work of CBS has also been shaped by these new preoccupations over the years, as the Manual for Contextual Bible Study (2013) can show, containing studies that deal not only with socio-economic, but also gender, environmental, and sexual issues.

4.1.2. Commitments and Presuppositions of CBS:

Contextual Bible Study is a methodology that has given privilege to certain commitments and presuppositions to read the Bible and its reality, which are central to its ideo-theological framework and shape its practical work. One of the central commitments proposed by CBS to those who read the Bible through its methodology is to engage with the text and the context in a way that promotes individual and social transformation. According to Gerald West, CBS is a method that can contribute to "explore how trained and ordinary readers can work together to read the Bible in an individually and socially transformative way in our South African context" (West 1993: 9).

This author considers as one of the central goals of the Contextual Bible Study method, promoting transformation. West (1993: 12; see also 2003: 46) states: "In working with Contextual Bible Study groups I have identified at least four central concerns or commitments". The first one he mentions is "a commitment to read the Bible from the perspective of the South African context, particularly from the perspective of the poor and oppressed" (West 1993: 12; 2003: 46). This evidences one of the aspects that motivated the creation not only of the Institute for the study of the Bible, but also of the CBS methodology, which is to read the Bible from a particular context and to deal with the difficult situation of those oppressed and marginalized. The second of the commitments mentioned by West is related to "…a commitment to read the Bible in community with others, particularly with those from contexts different from our own" (West 1993: 12 and 2003: 46). This echoes the necessity to read the Bible with others and therefore have a range of different resources to interpret the text and the reality from different perspectives. The third element central in the CBS is the "…commitment to read the Bible critically" (West 1993: 12 and 2003: 46), which reminds about Wittenberg's and West's preoccupations of offering some academic skills to the community of "not trained readers" as resources that can contribute to the engagement with the text and with the context. The last commitment, which is

the one that I mentioned at the beginning, is related to the desire to promote "…individual and social transformation through contextual Bible study" (West 1993: 12 and 2003: 46).

The ideological and theological framework that has shaped these commitments and which guides the parameters of the work of the CBS method is closely related, as I mentioned before, to Liberation Theology and Hermeneutics (West 2014: 1), especially following the idea of the preferential option for the poor. According to West (1993: 13), "…contextual bible study…decided…to read the Bible from a particular perspective…the perspective of the poor and oppressed. The poor and oppressed are those who are socially, politically, economically or culturally marginalized and exploited." In this sense, it could be said that the ideological and political position of CBS is clearly biased with a preference to work from the perspective of the oppressed people who suffer under different categories of domination. Such preference, however, is not only ideo-political, but also ideo-theological, since the understanding of God of those who are closely related to the construction of the CBS methodology think that their ideological position is a consequence of their faith. West (1993: 13) makes this clear when he states that "We (those working with CBS) have made this choice because we believe God is particularly concerned for the poor and the oppressed". In the CBS methodology, the theological and ideological positions are one, and the understanding that God is calling for justice and liberation becomes central in the work with the Bible and the context. For West (1993: 14), "Our readings of the Bible and our concern for justice and righteousness in South Africa clearly indicate that God is particularly concerned for the marginalized and vulnerable." In affirmations like this one, there is no doubt that CBS claims to be part of the Liberation Theology movement, while it also becomes evident that the task that is pursued through this methodology, is to change social structures and individual perceptions in order to promote justice and emancipation.

CBS commitments, therefore, require ethical choices and abandon the idea of a non-ideological or ahistorical praxis or theological discourse, bringing the privilege to read the text from the academy to the communities of "ordinary" readers. West (2014: 3) argues that "…the ethical choice of social relations as the crux of liberation theologies and the poor, marginalised and despised as the primary dialogue partners of liberation theologies *require* the epistemological privilege of the poor, marginalised and despised". Choosing to read from the poor and oppressed is not only an ethical step based on faith and theological principles, but also is a epistemological movement that recognizes the need to construct theology from and through the perspective of the silenced and dominated.

Besides these four main commitments, CBS also has other presuppositions that need to be mentioned since they are important to understand the methodology. CBS, for example, recognizes the important role that "context" plays in any reading of the text, acknowledging its influential role in the

interpretive process. In this regard, Gerald West (1993: 12) comments that "We all bring our contexts with us to our readings of the Bible" and that it is because of this that "…Contextual Bible Study recognizes that we are all to some extent shaped by our contexts". This argument is important when dealing with interpretations that claim to be universal and methodologies that present themselves as "objective", stating clearly that CBS recognizes "…that our contexts influence our readings of the Bible" (West 1993: 12). One of the important elements of CBS, therefore, is to understand that our discourses about God and our reality depend on the social, cultural, racial, economic, gender, and theological aspects that influence us in our context.

The consideration of the Bible as an instrument for transformation also plays an important role in the presuppositions of CBS. According to West (2014: 23-24) CBS contributes to "appropriate and apply the Bible to reality. The Bible is already a resource for transformation…which should include both the personal and the social"; the Bible is appropriated for projects of liberation that should include "the existential, the political, the economic, the cultural and the religious spheres of life." (West 1993: 24). Together with a principle that the Bible can offer inputs for emancipation, its ambiguous dynamics are acknowledged and with this the possibility that the text also becomes an oppressive tool. West points out how Black and Feminist Theology, together with Postcolonialism, among others, have demonstrated how "the Bible is a site of struggle, representing both liberating and dominating discourses engaged in overt or covert contestation" (West 2014: 6). CBS, therefore, will utilize socio-historic, literary and metaphoric resources in order to deal with these voices, giving privilege to the marginalized ones (West 2014: 6).

4.1.3. CBS's Tasks:

What the Contextual Bible Study tries to do reflects its origins, commitments and presuppositions. As I already mentioned, it is interested in showing how the Bible can be read from a contextual perspective and reflect collectively instead of individually. This capacity was recognized, as I mentioned before, by people involved in the CBS work, such as Gerald West (1993: 24). However, it has also been experienced in other contexts, as in the case of Scotland through the work of J. Riches. For this scholar, "CBS is a method that encourages readers to read the Bible in ways appropriate to their own contexts and which allow them to engage in dialogue with one another to address current concerns in the light of the biblical texts" (Riches 2010: 3). This author, therefore, acknowledges the communitarian and contextual centrality in CBS.

The challenge for CBS methodology, is to help those who participate in it to understand the Bible in a more profound way, especially in terms of the different ideo-theological agendas that the text

contains and consequently the diversity of interpretations they can promote. West (1993: 20) mentions how "…in the same way that various interpretations of the Bible represent differing (and sometimes conflicting) perspectives so too the various texts of the Bible represent differing (and sometimes conflicting) perspectives." The dynamics of the theological discourse within the text and also in the interpretative process will open the possibility to challenge the oppressive theologies of most of our context, to talk about God in different ways and therefore approach the reality with a different perspective. This perspective is that of those who have suffered oppression and exploitation of any kind, since one of the tasks of CBS is to make visible those who have become invisible, and to put their voices and struggles in the centre of its theological praxis and reflection. Even though West (2014: 6) mentions the possibility always is that "the voices of the marginalised within the text are so compromised by layers of dominating discourse that the Bible can only be an instrumentalist resource, not a substantive resource", it still brings light through the struggles of those who have been oppressed and dominated.

In its insistence of rescuing marginal voices, the CBS methodology has also contributed to construct new knowledge and discourses about the Bible and God, entering into conflict with the fixed and established official discourses. Riches recognizes the transformative potential of CBS by arguing that "it develops skills of listening and valuing the contribution of all the members of a group, who often find that the discussion[…] of issues in ways that call into question conventional ways of thinking" (Riches 2010: 23). Conventional thinking is problematized and new ways of thinking, or also those that have been marginalized and silenced, are spoken about overtly. In that sense, the theological discourses and biblical appropriations of the peoples have the space to move from the private to the public sphere; In addition, they usually become counter-discourses because of its connection to social struggles for justice and liberation, subverting the hegemonic discourses. West (2014: 1) refers to this by saying that "Liberation hermeneutics in general and Contextual Bible Study as a specific form locates itself with this nexus, serving the dialogical movement from people's theology to prophetic theology". Clearly, for West the CBS methodology has to encourage the construction of theological discourses that speak of God and the reality from a liberating perspective, giving its contribution to the Liberation Hermeneutics and Theology (West 2014: 1).

In summary, the CBS methodology was originated in a South African context that struggled with apartheid and where the necessity was to read the Bible from this reality in the search for social and individual transformation, especially of those living directly under different forms of oppression and domination. Reading from the perspective of the marginalized, and assuming a theological position

where God is beside them, CBS promotes the engagement of different types of readers in the search for liberating praxis and discourses about God.

4.2 Methodology and main steps of South African Contextual Bible Study

The second aspect I want to deal with in terms of Contextual Bible Study is related to its methodological steps. To describe them, I engage with the role of the reader and its context in the CBS, then move to a discussion around facilitation. After this, I refer to the usage of the Bible, to end by mentioning the way the results of the CBS method are put into practice.

4.2.1. Reader and Context in CBS

Readers and their context have a primordial role in the interpretive process of the CBS methodology. Gerald West (2003: 46) maintains that "The experiences, questions, needs and interests as well as the readings and resources of the community, are the starting point of Contextual Bible Study…", showing how central readers and their resources and realities become as interpretive keys in the CBS methodology. This principle is a result of the privilege to interpret the Bible which has been given to those in academic and religious positions of power, which CBS contests and modifies to include the marginalized voices of the community in the conversations about God, the Bible and the reality. West (2014: 1) describes how ordinary readers of the Bible have always hovered on the edges of academic biblical studies, but within biblical liberation hermeneutics, they have found a more central and integral place. West reiterates the idea of CBS as part of the liberation hermeneutics process, and therefore sees as part of this project the need to give centrality to the role of the readers and their context in the interpretation of the Bible.

Those who are going to be reading the Bible in the CBS methodology are primarily the ones who belong to the "organized poor" (West 2003: 46), who would be capable of constructing theology without depending on professional theologians or biblical scholars (West 2014: 8). In view of this, it is important to recognize the agency of the impoverished and marginalized in the interpretive process. In addition, it is necessary to highlight that CBS does not promote that only the impoverished and marginalized should read the text, but that the interpretation should be a collaborative process between "ordinary" and "trained" readers (See West 2014: 2). In relation to this, West (1993: 16) mentions that "…both trained and ordinary readers are active subjects in the reading process…" Reading together means that they share the space and no one imposes on others an interpretation of text or reality. The notion of reading "with" comes from the recognition that people's discourses about God and themselves have usually been ignored and silenced by those who have the power to create dominant discourses. Gerald West (1993: 16) argues that "Readers of the Bible from these communities (poor and

oppressed) have usually had their interpretations silenced and suppressed by the dominant interpretations. The silence is not the only consequence of the dynamics of oppression that marginalized people suffer, but also the dependency on the hegemonic discourses that they are in danger of interiorizing. West (1993: 16) mentioned this point when he stated that "Some readers from these communities have even come to accept the dominant interpretation as their own. Even though this situation can still be found in the communities of the impoverished and oppressed, the work of CBS has also acknowledged the resistance and independence of these communities in the face of these hegemonic discourses (See West 2014: Also Scott 2000). That CBS begins with the reality and experience of readers who belong to marginalized communities becomes a strategic move in the process of reading and working "together to break the culture of silence and to recover the identity and experiences of the poor and oppressed" (West 1993: 16).

The way this reading together should function in terms of Liberation Hermeneutics has been contested. Citing Frostin (1988), West (2014: 8) mentions how "Some, like Segundo and Per Frostin, favour a strong role for middle-class theologians and organic intellectuals in assisting the poor to break their silence 'and create their own language'". According to these words, Segundo believes in a strong influence of organic academics in the theological construction of the impoverished and oppressed peoples. However, West distances the work of CBS from this perspective, promoting a methodology that recognizes people's theology as relevant and allows it to become prophetic theology (West 2014: 8). West suggests that "Whilst there is a role for socially engaged biblical scholars and theologians in facilitating a more structured and systematic prophetic theology from 'people's Theology", there can be no prophetic theology without people's theology" (West 2014: 8). The argument here is clear, since it is established that the task of CBS and Liberation Hermeneutics, centred in constructing prophetic theology, will never be achieved without the participation of the marginalized and oppressed.

In his work with CBS in the Scottish context, Riches rescues as a central point in the methodology the interpretative process that occurs "between qualified and unqualified readers…" (Riches 2010: 23). However, he admits the difficulties that he faces in his context in trying to run CBS's workshops with "organized poor". According to Riches (2010: 5), "The South Africans had resolved to work only with organized groups of poor and marginalized people…Finding similar groups in the West of Scotland who would be interested in Bible study was more difficult". Riches might be making reference to one of the difficulties of adapting the methodology to contexts different from the South African, which is going to be interesting to consider when I try to implement CBS into the Costa Rican reality.

Together with the readers, the context is central to the CBS methodology, and it cannot be neglected if the intention is to respond prophetically to the reality of the people. Gerald West (1993: 4), for example, claims that "We cannot hear either the concerns of the poor and oppressed or God's concern for them unless we are prepared to analyse our context". The context, therefore, needs to be carefully studied so the reflection from the text and its application in the reality can be relevant to the poor and oppressed who read the Bible. CBS will require not only that the context of the readers is recognized, but also that their knowledge about it be highlighted, which is a contested idea among those scholars committed to reading the Bible with impoverished and marginalized communities. West (2014: 3) states that the existing tension "between those 'scholarly' readers who grant the poor and marginalised an ethical privilege, privileging their context, and those 'scholarly' readers who grant the poor and marginalised both an ethical and an epistemological privilege, privileging both their context and their own knowledge of their context". The reading of the text in CBS, which follows the see-judge-act method (West 2014: 2), will emphasize the necessity to begin with readers from poor and marginal organized groups and their understandings of their situation.

Reflecting on the notion of the "poor" and "oppressed" as the central agent in the interpretive process, West mentions how this subject of interpretation has been changing over the years. This author mentions how Miguez Bonino, in a visit to South Africa in 1994, asked for a "careful and detailed analysis of received concepts such as "the poor"." (West 2014: 9). According to West (2014: 9), Miguez Bonino said that "the solidarity amongst the poor and other marginalised sectors could no longer be taken for granted. The 'new poor'…preyed on each other instead of standing with each other. Such problematization, which occurred twenty years ago, is still relevant since it avoids any idealization of the "poor". However, it is clear that the impoverished and oppressed groups of our context continue to be the privileged subjects in the CBS methodology.

4.2.2. Facilitator and Facilitation in CBS

Another important element in the CBS methodology is the role played by the facilitator and facilitation in the interpretive process. The CBS is a collaborative process, as I have mentioned, where "trained" and "ordinary" readers of the Bible commit to interpret together in the search for social and individual transformation. The facilitator has to have different skills such as being able to understand the group, promote participation and discussion, manage conflict, provide information when necessary, use local resources, and generally allow the process to develop (CBS Manual 2013: 13-14). Although it is usually expected that the one who facilitates the process is an organic scholar, someone prepared in the academy, not every case is like this. In this regard, Nadar states that "In West's description of the Contextual Bible Study process it is clear that the facilitator of the Bible study is not always the Biblical

scholar, who writes up on the process afterward" (Nadar 2003: 194). Nadar, however, has her own criteria for those who would like to engage as facilitators in the CBS process. According to this author, "the facilitator should be trained with the tools of critical scholarship…should be committed to liberation in the community; and …should be an organic member / of the community" (Nadar 2003: 195). Nadar recovers two of the CBS classic elements related to the facilitators, which are the technical preparation in scholarship and also the commitment to liberation, but interestingly adds to them the fact that the facilitator should be part of the group where the study is run. Even though her contribution is interesting, in my opinion it is difficult to fulfil because not every community or group has someone trained in biblical scholarship, nor should everyone trained in scholarship be limited to working with communities where he/she does not belong.

In terms of the process of reading, Nadar argues that instead of reading "with'', as was highlighted by West and Riches, the facilitator has to engage in a process of reading "to" (Nadar 2003: 203). According to Nadar (2003: 203), "…the term "speaking with" only applies as an initial step, because even though I share a common identity with my community, our ways of approaching the Biblical text are different given my role of critic, so I do not "read with" them, I "read to" them". Positioning herself in what she considers a "concientization paradigm" (Nadar 2003: 203), Nadar thinks that the facilitator has to embrace a strong position in the CBS process guiding the interpretive process, which in a certain way will privilege their own ideo-theological interests instead of the group of readers. It is because of the ideo-theological agenda of every facilitator, something that cannot be denied, that Nadar emphasizes this idea. In her opinion, the acknowledgement that I, as an intellectual, am "speaking to" rather than "speaking with" exposes the myth of innocent, dis-interested interpretation on the part of the intellectual, on the one hand, and on the other, it helps the intellectual to foreground his/her activist agenda (Nadar 2003: 204). Nadar thinks that she, as a facilitator, has resources to offer to the community (Nadar 2003: 187), and argues that these need to be evident through a strongly guided facilitation process.

That the scholar who works with CBS methodology is ideo-theologically laden is not something new. Actually, it is clear that any scholar has an agenda that he or she makes evident when the interpretation process comes. Gerald West (2014: 6), for example, states that "Like ordinary readers, scholarly readers use their ideo-theological orientations to construct an order or shape to scripture. The shape is not inherent to Scripture, it is ideo-theologically constructed". Since scholars and organic intellectuals construct the CBS, their ideo-theological framework will be reflected in the final product, which, however, according to the principles will have to be shaped by every encounter with the communities. Facilitation, therefore, becomes a central part of the CBS methodology, where the

capacity to read "with" and the clarity about the project of the facilitator and the CBS play an important role in the way the Bible is read.

4.2.3. Critical reading of the Bible and CBS

Another important aspect in CBS is its commitment to read the Bible critically. The interest with this is to offer readers resources to engage in a critical way with their reality and the Bible as well. In this regard, West argues that one of the Contextual Bible Study commitments is "…to facilitate the development of critical consciousness by beginning with critical bible reading" (West 1993: 19). But what is critical? As Gerald West (1993: 22; see also 2003: 47) points out, "…a critical approach to the Bible is that we ask questions in a systematic and structured way." Therefore, CBS methodology will implement tools from the academy and the context in order to interrogate the biblical text in its different dimensions and understand its diverse dynamics. According to West (2008: 202) "…the Contextual Bible Study is framed, beginning and ending, with what we call "community consciousness questions", questions that overtly depend and draw on local resources." It is important to note therefore, that the way to interrogate the text is importantly framed by questions that come from the reality and resources of the readers. Related to this, West goes on, saying that "Community consciousness questions are the ones that draw "on the local knowledge and experience of the community…"" (West 2008: 203). On the other hand, the critical consciousness questions are the ones created to achieve a deep knowledge of the biblical text in its literary, socio-historic and symbolic dimensions (West 2014: 8). West (2008: 203) mentions how "Critical consciousness questions draw on aspects of biblical scholarship" that complete the necessary elements so the engagement between "ordinary" and "trained" readers can occur. Reading the Bible critically is intended to offer resources to understand text and context in a more structured and informed way, combining popular and "professional" knowledge and considering both equally valid.

The construction of the questions and general dynamics of the CBS should be done by a team (see West 2010: 175-190), where the process is held by UJAMAA, NGOs and other organizations involved in the community, who choose the topic, text and ways of engagement. This element related to questions and text, however, has been experienced differently in contexts like the Scottish one. In his work in Scotland, Riches has found that groups and facilitators can struggle around the openness of the questions especially if they are not finding a way to impose the agenda of the facilitator on the group. In terms of the CBS questions, Riches (2010: 9) has found that people ask things like "…Were the questions put to the readers genuinely open? Or did the leaders know beforehand what kind of answers were expected? Did the fact that the facilitators had chosen the passage and the questions prejudice the chances of real dialogue emerging from the discussions?" The method of CBS in the Scottish

context has been concerned about having critical and community consciousness questions where the agenda of the facilitator is not that strongly perceived, so the process of interpretation can be as open as possible. However, I think that CBS includes an agenda when it interprets for a concrete ideo-theological framework that privileges the marginalized and oppressed, and that such an agenda will be the one that guides the interpretive process.

In terms of the reading of text, the questions will generally be constructed to develop knowledge in the literary and symbolic dimensions of the text. CBS, therefore, prioritizes reading at these levels as a way to empower everyone to participate in the reading by giving them access to the resources of interpretation that are closer to them. In the words of West (2014: 5), "Literary-type and thematic-type 'scholarly' modes of reading, though not how most ordinary readers interpret the Bible, do offer more egalitarian entry points for ordinary readers to participate on more equal terms with scholarly readers". Thematic and literary elements of the text will be important in the CBS process, which will also include socio-historic reference in a hermeneutic circle that promotes understanding of different layers of the text using thematic-literary dimensions as entry and exit. West (2014: 8) explains this process by arguing that "Contextual Bible Study…begins with the most accessible mode of reading, the thematic-symbolic, then moves to the literary and only then moves to the socio-historical before finally concluding once again with thematic-symbolic appropriation". CBS, therefore, develops by recovering the theology of the people to move to the literary text, which is interrogated in its literary dimensions and if necessary, its socio-historic. The goal is to end up with the theology of the people, however, changed due to the encounter with the text and others. In this dynamic, the contributions of the "trained readers", with respect to the ways texts are interrogated on their literary level, will play a key role.

Reading the Bible critically will also be a way to offer "ordinary" readers tools to understand dynamics of the texts that are important when the task is to deconstruct discourses of oppression and construct discourses of liberation. In this regard, for example, the CBS will open space to engage with the Bible from an ideological perspective and to read the whole text instead of giving preference to some parts over the others. West explains this idea (1993: 21) when he argues that "Reading the Bible critically implies that we admit that the Bible is ideological and also that we avoid a selective reading of the text but engage with every part of it". An ideological approach to the Bible will also consequently lead to an ideological analysis of its interpretations. These two elements will be considered in the questions that are asked in the CBS process, especially if the reading looks to respond to the situation of the poor and oppressed from a liberating perspective. West (1993: 20) states that "Commitments to read the Bible from the perspective of the poor and oppressed and to reading the Bible in community

with others require that the ideological (or perspectival) nature of the Bible and its interpretations be investigated." CBS methodology opens the space to understand how what the texts and its interpreters say is mainly constructed from a specific perspective.

These ideological approaches to the Bible and its interpreters allow CBS to propose the notion of contestation, which becomes a tool that helps readers engage with the different perspectives that can be found in the text. For this purpose, West argues that Bruegemann is an author that has become very helpful in dealing with the idea of different voices in the Bible (2014: 7). West (2014: 7) mentions that the Contextual Bible Study process works overtly with the notion of contestation but limits this contestation to two primary scriptural voices, following to some extent the schema suggested by the early work of Walter Bruegemann. Bruegemann and his work on Mosaic and Davidic (1993) theology contributes to an understanding of the struggles for power and the dominating and prophetic voices that interact and contend in the biblical text.

The notion of ideology as an element present in the Bible and in the interpretations made of it offers the possibility to understand that what we find in the text and in those who interpret it are some of the many voices that speak about God. Riches (2010: 23), describing the work of CBS in Scotland, mentions that "A CBS conversation includes within it talk about God, and the way in which the historical authors spoke about God in their own situation. It explores the way in which God is spoken of between the participants in their current situation." The issue that "talking about God from a situation" is mentioned, clearly refers to the aspect of ideological positions when the text was composed and when it continues being interpreted. As West (2003: 48) says, in CBS "we want to insist that there is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, no innocent text". To speak about God in the situation that affects the people, making structural questions about the reality and the Bible, will be a central part of CBS methodology.

4.2.4. Public space and CBS

The final aspect I want to deal with in terms of CBS process is related to how it influences the public space. CBS is framed by the see-judge-act methodology, in a process that takes reflection into practice. According to West (2014: 2), CBS requires "moving from social analysis to biblical reflection to social action"; defined in those words is one of the main purposes of Contextual Bible Study. These actions, I would say, begin in the "discursive" area, with the construction of discourses that challenge the official theology, especially in its oppressive areas. Authors like West (1993: 21) believe that "If we do not find ways to read the Bible which are transformative and liberating in our context then we are abandoning the Bible to those who use it to legitimate domination and oppression." One of the impacts

of CBS in the public realm, therefore, is to become a voice of contestation against those interpretive projects that promote injustice and submission.

CBS will emphasize that "empowering and liberating interpretation of the Bible is still possible" (West 2003: 48), and is willing to influence churches in this construction of alternative and liberating theological discourses. According to West (2014: 8), "one of the 'acts' of contextual Bible reading is to facilitate the 'in/corporation' of its processes and products into the very fabric of the church". The theology discussed in the groups, therefore, is constructed to influence the way the church speaks about God and engages with the context. However, CBS does not only motivate action in a discursive dimension, but in a practical one as well. West mentions how, through the work of the UJAMAA Centre, participants of the workshops are required to engage in three specific types of action (West 2014: 7). According to this author, these are "immediate actions that can be taken up without too much delay or too many additional resources; intermediate actions that, whilst feasible, require further planning; visionary long-term actions that draw us forward into the future of God's project". CBS always finishes with an action that is ideo-theologically supported by the encounter with the text and the reality of the community, motivating groups to engage with their social realities and the struggle to transform them into liberating contexts.

4.3 Constructing a Contextual Bible Study for the Costa Rican context

This last section of the thesis has the purpose of exploring how a Contextual Bible Study can be implemented in the Costa Rican context to deal with socio-economic injustice. This project has been interested in acquiring biblical and contextual tools to construct a biblical study that can help different Costa Rican groups and communities read Genesis 47.13-26 and reflect on their socio-economic situation. The idea is to invite them to see how the Bible is also interested in socio-economic dynamics, and how there are theological voices that can help them deal with socio-economic issues in their contexts today. In addition, another goal is to give these communities and groups their own voice at the while reading the texts and interpreting them for their realities and situations. The invitation, following the CBS model of the UJAMAA Centre, is to read the Bible for social and personal transformation, focusing on understanding the ideo-theological and socio-economic dimensions of the text and also the structural systems that oppress the Costa Rican population today.

The study is still in construction, and a tentative draft that I will include here is intended to be the beginning of an engagement with reading groups, an encounter that should offer resources to shape and reshape the CBS. This draft is situated next to the study that the UJAMAA Centre constructed on Genesis 37-50, which was concerned with dealing with family, community and leadership (CBS Manual

2013: 38-41) as well as with issues of land in the KwaZulu-Natal area (West 2010). There are elements that relate and differentiate both of them and the study I construct here wants to take some of the resources the UJAMAA version to deal with socio-economic issues in the Costa Rican context. There are certain presuppositions that I consider need to be highlighted in order to understand the way this CBS is intended to work.

First of all, part of my point of departure is that I can contribute, with my biblical and theological formation and frameworks, to the communities that will be engaging with this study. In that sense, I assume Nadar's position when she argues, in her own work with her community, that she has "resources to offer the community from my (her) own reading of the text" (Nadar 2003: 187). As Nadar says, this position does not imply that the opinions and interpretations of the community are not considered seriously (Nadar 2003: 187), but certainly proposes that the voice of the "trained" reader assumes a strong position in the interpretation of the text. Because of the way the Bible is read in most of the Costa Rican contexts, where, usually social issues are never addressed and the theology spoken is more "conservative" than prophetic, I think that my responsibility, as Nadar (2003) states, is to work from a position of concientization. Nadar (2003: 187-188) maintains that "her aim…is overtly framed by a concientization paradigm", since in her opinion it is only during the period of concientization that the hidden transcript (if one exists at all) may be activated". I believe that the concientization paradigm Nadar mentions is necessary in contexts where the Bible has been taken away from projects of justice and social struggle.

In view of this, I believe that in a context like the Costa Rican one, it is important to emphasize the idea, especially in religious circles, that "It is unbiblical and untheological to separate religion from politics" (Wittenberg 1993: 8). In Costa Rica, the Bible, and religion in general, has been losing its relevant position in the society due to its incapacity to deal with contemporary issues from a liberating, inclusive and prophetic perspective (see a similar reality in Scotland through Riches 2010: 6). Therefore, I consider that CBS, because of its principles and methodology, becomes a powerful tool to understand structural situations in any context. This is what Riches (2010: 27) highlights about the CBS influence in the South African context, mentioning that "CBS in South Africa has placed a similar emphasis on helping people understand their political and economic situation more fully." In relation to this, is the necessity to reconsider the notions of sacred and secular. In the Costa Rican reality, very few churches will emphasize the necessity to engage with social issues as part of their praxis, since their ideo-theological framework usually privileges life after death than the present times. Therefore, I follow Riches in his belief that CBS can contribute to a problematization of this aspect because its "relating of sacred story to everyday concerns challenges easy distinctions between "religious" and

"secular", "sacred" and "mundane"" (Riches 2010: 29). These are some of the considerations that played a relevant role in the construction of the CBS to deal with socio-economic injustice in the Costa Rican context. The CBS is as follows:

1. Do you think that there is economic exploitation and social injustice in your community/country? Who are the exploiters/exploited and what are the ways of exploitation? Share with the rest of the groups.

2. Read Genesis 47.13-26. What is the text about?

3. Who are the main characters in the story and what do we know about them? Make a drawing/statue that shows the relationships between them. Share with the rest of the groups.

4. What are Joseph's actions and words in the story? Who is benefitted or harmed due to them? How is the problem of the Egyptians solved in the text? What do you think the author is suggesting about Joseph's leadership and economic relations? Share with the rest of the groups.

5. Different from what happens in the Joseph story (Genesis 37-50), where the narrator tells us that *God is with Joseph* (see especially chapter 39), in Genesis 47.13-26 there is no reference to God, and therefore, we do not know clearly what he thinks about Joseph's ways to save the Egyptians. However, other texts of the Old Testament that have similarities with Genesis 47.13-26 could help us have an idea of how God would react in this situation. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 seems to have many elements in common with Genesis 47.13-26, especially in terms of socio-economic relations and the reality where they were produced.

   Read 1 Samuel 8.11-18. Do you find any connection between this text and Joseph's actions? If so, which ones? What is God's position in the text? How do you think this helps us to understand God's position before Joseph's actions in Genesis 47.13-26?

Socio-economic relations in monarchic Israel

Ancient Israel was characterized by socio-economic injustice. Some experts argue that before the monarchy, the Israelites were organized in a communal egalitarian system. This system was based on local leadership and had as its main characteristics the prohibition to sell/take the ancestral lands and also to charge interests on loans. It was a protective society based on the faith in Yahweh and the liberation of Egypt, where peasants would produce for their consumption and in times of distress solidarity was required between the people. However, the rise of the monarchy marked a transformation in this society. There was now a centralized power represented by a king and a court. Rulers created "legitimate" but unjust ways to extract resources like land, produce, work, and animals. Certain amounts of these resources belonged to the king, the priests and the court's officials, who required them as taxes and tithes. The temple functioned as the centre where all these resources were taken. This caused economic distress in the population, who saw their resources reduced in order to fulfil the requirements of the monarchy and the new elites. On many occasions, natural disasters or other problems would affect the people's crops, which meant that they would not be able to pay their dues. Money lending became popular, but lenders would ask for high-rate interest of the peasantry, who would be bonded to them due to debt. When peasants were unable to pay their debts, lenders, who mostly belonged to the court and the elites, would take land, animals and even people as slaves to repay the debt. The people were slowly impoverished to the point of losing their ancestral land, becoming day-labourers and tenants on what was their property. They were entrapped by a systemic oppression. Some religious sectors, especially those related to the temple and the king, created a theology to legitimize the actions of the rulers and therefore have religious support to extract the resources of the population. However, marginal religious voices were also raised to denounce the injustice of the rulers and their system, and the falsehood of a God that legitimized oppression. Genesis 47.13-26 and 1 Samuel 8.11-18 seem to be texts related to the groups interested in denouncing that type of socio-economic injustice in Ancient Israel.

6. With the information of 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and the paragraph above, what do you thing Genesis 47.13-26 suggests about socio-economic relations? Is the text praising or criticizing Joseph's ways to save the Egyptians? Share your answers with the other groups.

7. Read Genesis 47.25. What do you think about the Egyptians' words of thankfulness to Joseph's actions? Do you think they are serious or sarcastic? How can we put together salvation and grace with slavery? What do you think the author of Genesis 47.13-26 is suggesting in verse 25?

In Ancient Israel, as happens today, rulers created different discourses to convince the people that their actions were righteous and honest, although most of the time their interests were to benefit themselves by abusing others. People, on many occasions, interiorize those discourses as theirs, assuming a way of thinking that is the one of those who rule over them. Verse 25 can be an example of those desires of the rulers, who wish to have submissive people to dominate, people who accept oppression as salvation. However, the author of Genesis 47.13-26 seems to be aware of the discourse of the powerful. Using irony, which is one of the literary elements we use every day to ridicule or mock a reality that is presented falsely, the author puts together in verse 25 "salvation and grace" with "slavery" to show its audience the real salvation brought by the rulers. When the rulers mean salvation, they bring slavery, and that is what they want the people to believe, that slavery is the only way to be saved. Genesis 47.13-26 could be denouncing this discourse that the people do not believe anymore. Instead of showing acceptance, the author of the story is telling us that the people already know the methods used by the rulers, and that therefore people will not believe their manipulation to accept oppression and injustice as a way of salvation anymore.

8. Do you think Joseph's salvation is in accordance to God's will? Could have Joseph saved the Egyptians in a different way? How? What does the story tell us about the way we should react to actions of oppression? Should we thank them or denounce them?

9. In what ways does this study contribute to deal with issues of socio-economic oppression in our community/country? What can we do to help people in our community/country to understand the dynamics of systemic oppression and denounce it?

In terms of the CBS, questions 1, 8 and 9 belong to what is defined as community consciousness questions, trying to draw on the knowledge and experience that the readers have of their own reality and guiding them to reflect on how the text can illuminate their context in relation to socio-economic issues. Questions 2 to 4 belong to the critical consciousness questions since they

intend to draw the attention of the readers to the literary details of the text. Questions 5 to 7 play a different role, because even though they are dealing with literary details from the text, readers are also required to expose more overtly their theological frameworks and make evident their theological discourses after an encounter with the text. The intention with these sets of questions is to empower the community to construct their own theological discourses, since most of these religious groups that I will be working with are usually silent and dependent on the discourses of their religious leaders, which impose, usually dominating, totalizing and submissive interpretations over them. The sections in bold are intended to offer socio-historic details of the text which can contribute to understand more deeply the systemic oppressions in biblical times. The idea with these pieces of information is that readers also start to think about systemic oppression in their own context, which is one of the main goals of the CBS I have created.

My idea is to be extremely overt and clear that we are talking about the Bible and economic justice, since in the Costa Rican context the Bible is usually not read to deal with social issues. The Bible study will be put into practice with different groups to test it as a resource to the struggle for socio-economic justice in the Costa Rican context.

5. Conclusion:

In this chapter I have offered a brief description of the history of Costa Rica in terms of economic models, emphasizing the shift from a welfare to a neoliberal system. I have highlighted the current socio-economic difficulties the Costa Rican society faces as an attempt to connect it to the historical context of Genesis 47.13-26. In addition, I have engaged with the way the Bible has been read in Costa Rica, using as examples the context of the 1980's and the current situation. This section has shown how some sectors have been preoccupied in reading the Bible while taking into consideration socio-historic issues, it is still the norm to prioritize moral and individual preoccupations before socio-economic ones.

To deal with this context I have explored the presuppositions of Liberation and Postcolonial Hermeneutics, trying to understand their methodologies and also offering input to see how they can be implemented in Costa Rica to deal with socio-economic injustice. Finally, build this bridge between text, context and hermeneutical framework, I have used the Contextual Bible study methodology. From this reading approach, I have created a draft to read Genesis 47.13-26 in Costa Rica to deal with economic exploitation and also re-interpret the text from a liberating perspective. The conclusion for this chapter is that CBS can be very useful to promote a more contextual reading of the Bible in protestant

communities, which traditionally have separated their theological constructions from historical preoccupations.

Conclusion

This thesis, has examined how the Bible can offer liberating elements to respond to the problems of our contexts, especially in relation to socio-economic injustice. The first part of this work analysed Genesis 47.13-26. After dealing with its literary and socio-historic elements, I proposed that the rhetorical discourse of the story could be one that challenges and denounces the socio-economic exploitation of the monarchy and its tributary system. I argue that since the point of view of the story can be ambiguous, the literary dimensions and the tone of the story can offer grounds to support the idea that the text unveils economic oppression.

Chapter Two has offered elements to support this argument. The same analysis implemented with Genesis 47.13-26, which considered the literary and socio-historic aspects of the narrative, has been applied to Genesis 37-50 in order to determine its point of view in terms of socio-economic and ideo-theological discourse. In this chapter, I have argued that Genesis 37-50 represents a different perspective from that in Genesis 47.13-26, as a literary corpus with its main discourse representing a support of the monarchy and its tributary system. From this position, I have highlighted at least two

contending traditions in Genesis 37-50, saying that Genesis 47.13-26 has been introduced in this section at a later time in order to show a different perspective around the monarchy and its rule.

In Chapter Three, I have engaged with 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 and have analysed their literary and socio-historic dynamics, concluding that their point of view could be in harmony with the one in Genesis 47.13-26. 1 Samuel 8.11-18 and 1 Kings 12.1-20 seem to make evident the economic distress that the monarchy and the tributary system have caused in the life of the peasantry. In addition, these two texts strongly oppose the monarchy and its measures, which suggests that, due to their socio-economic and ideo-theological language and posture, they could have strong connections with Genesis 47.13-26. The three texts could belong to an Old Testament tradition that opposes those discourses that legitimate the king and its temple-state system.

As a result, my argument is that because Genesis 47.13-26 can offer the possibility of being interpreted as a text with a theology of resistance and denunciation of unjust systems, it could offer tools for the struggles of liberation in current times, specifically in the Costa Rican context.

In the final chapter I have described briefly the shift from a welfare to a neoliberal system in the Costa Rican context. I mention also, the consequences this shift has caused in the life of the majority, whose vulnerability has exposed them to a deterioration of their socio-economic condition. I mentioned how the Bible has been read in Costa Rica from different perspectives in regards the socio-economic situation of the country. I have described how, even though some groups have tried to reflect with a more historical and committed perspective, a majority of churches and Christian traditions still do not see it as important to engage with social issues in their biblical readings.

In addition, in this last chapter I have discussed the main elements that characterize Postcolonial and Liberation Hermeneutics highlighting the main aspects that I consider important for a re-reading of the text from a liberating perspective, especially in the reality of the Costa Rican systemic socio-economic injustice.

In addition to this, I have tried to re-read Genesis 47.13-26 from a Costa Rican perspective, not only with these interpretive frameworks, but also with the principles offered by the Contextual Bible Study methodology. The South African CBS, through its intention to read the Bible critically, contextually, in community and for individual/social transformation, has become an alternative for those who think that the Bible can respond to current social issues in the Costa Rican context. In light of this, following the methodology of CBS, I have created a draft to promote a contextual reading of Genesis 47.13-26 in the Costa Rican context of socio-economic injustice.

Last reflection

The thesis shows how the Bible has been used for projects of liberation and for projects of oppression. Even though my goal has been to read Genesis 47.13-26 for projects of liberation, as I said at the beginning, trying to give voice to those who have been marginalized and oppressed within and out of the text, I cannot use the text without acknowledging its limits for my agenda. The challenge with Genesis 47.13-26 was to understand its ideo-theological and socio-economic projects and consider if they were useful for projects of liberation today.

Itumeleng Mosala (1989: 6) has criticized biblical interpreters who use the texts for liberation without acknowledging that such texts come from the same groups that oppress and exploit. He warns us about the importance of understanding that the Bible has come to us "through hegemonic codes" and suggests how necessary it is to understand the dynamics of domination within the text and their interpretations, so the Scripture can be appropriated and transformed as a tool for liberation (Mosala 1989: 10-11). In this work, I tried to question Genesis 47.13-26 and see the possible agenda behind it. The negative portrayal of Joseph and his economic measures made me realize that it is unlikely that this text is a product of the groups related to the court or the king. It really presented their corruption and abuse against the masses. I cannot say with certainty that Genesis 47.13-26 comes from impoverished and oppressed people or that it is a scripture that defends their cause. Unfortunately, issues of authorship are difficult to define. However, what it is clear that such negative presentations of rulers and their economic measures must have come from groups that opposed their abusive and exploitative actions or at least were interested in de-legitimizing their power.

Thus, I suggest that Genesis 47.13-26 is a tool that we can use for liberation. We understand that the text comes from groups of power who can write. We also acknowledge that it comes from a certain class, who possessed land and cattle, who had silver and whose grain was confiscated. These are certainly not the poor and oppressed of the Israelites, but we can take their words and use them for the emancipation of those who have been impoverished and exploited by the rulers.

Genesis 47.13-26 is a text that ridicules. It challenges the ruling class and its dominant theology by saying that God is not with the exploitative king and its tributary system, something defended by the Joseph story and other texts of the Old Testament tradition. It separates God from the tributary system, and the divinity from the actions of the ruler, an agenda that goes against Genesis 37-50. To ridicule is sometimes the last resource of those who resist. They take advantage of the rulers' weaknesses and make them evident to the detriment of their power. This happens, for example, with the word "hyh", "to preserve life". The monarchic groups used this word in Genesis 45.4 and 50.20 to construct a discourse that suggests that their system brings abundance, land, bread, and life to everyone. However, those who oppose this ideology and have experienced the reality of the monarchic

system, appropriate the same language to attack the oppressive discourse. This occurs in Genesis 47.25, where those who resist such imposition of the reality use the same word to say that the "preservation of life" from their rulers brings slavery, dispossession, and perpetual indebtedness.

This insight contributes to a reading the text in a refreshing way and also makes the Decolonization of God possible, as Brett (2008: 31) suggests in a reading of the story from a Postcolonial perspective. In the Joseph story, God has been co-opted, as Storniollo (1996: 189) said, and the creators of Genesis 47.13-26 have understood this and rescued the God of liberation, the God who hears the oppressed when they cry "Shall we die before your eyes?" Sugirtharajah (2004: 261) proposes that one of the priorities of Post-colonialism in Biblical Studies is to read the text from the perspective of the oppressed, marginalized and victimized, whether they are Israelites or not. This principle is important not only for reading Genesis 47.13-26, but also for many other texts of the Old Testament, which encourage violence and domination in the name of God and against groups related and not related to Israel. We cannot just ignore what happens in Genesis 47.13-26 because Joseph is who oppresses and the victims of his actions are the Egyptians. His projects and the images of God that are behind them need to be questioned if we want to be faithful to promoting liberating realities. If the thesis promotes this task in those who read it, I will be more than satisfied with the work presented here.

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